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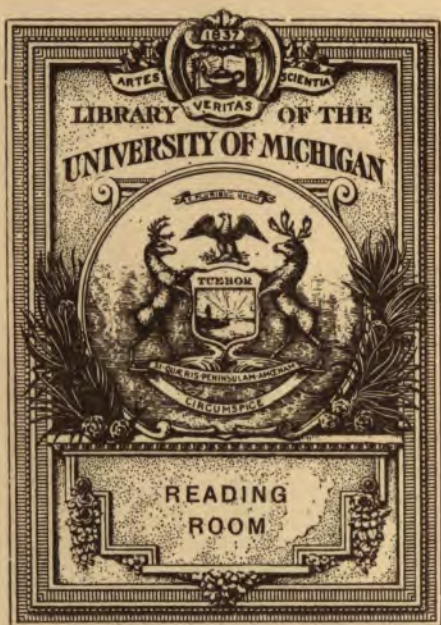
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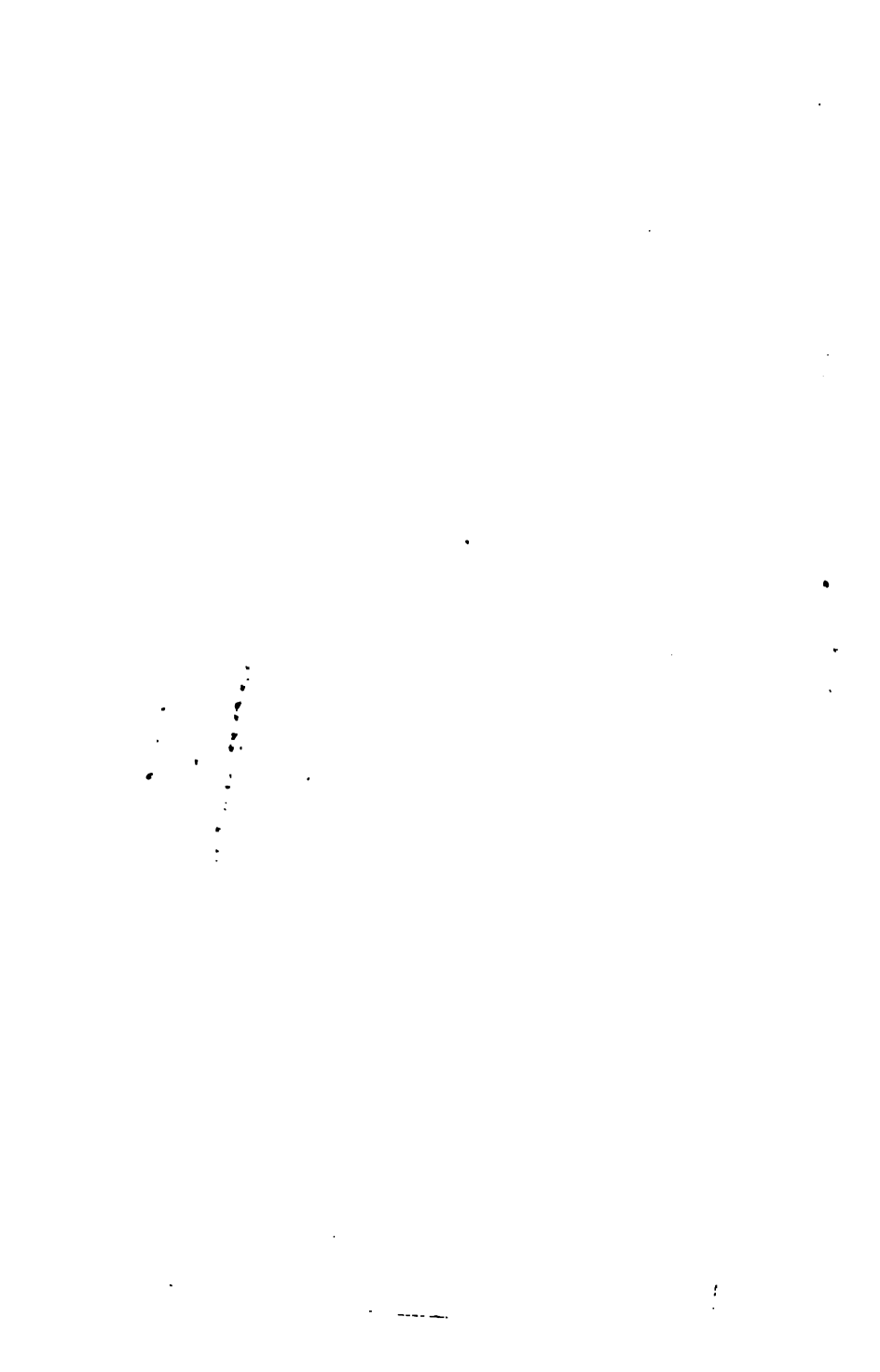






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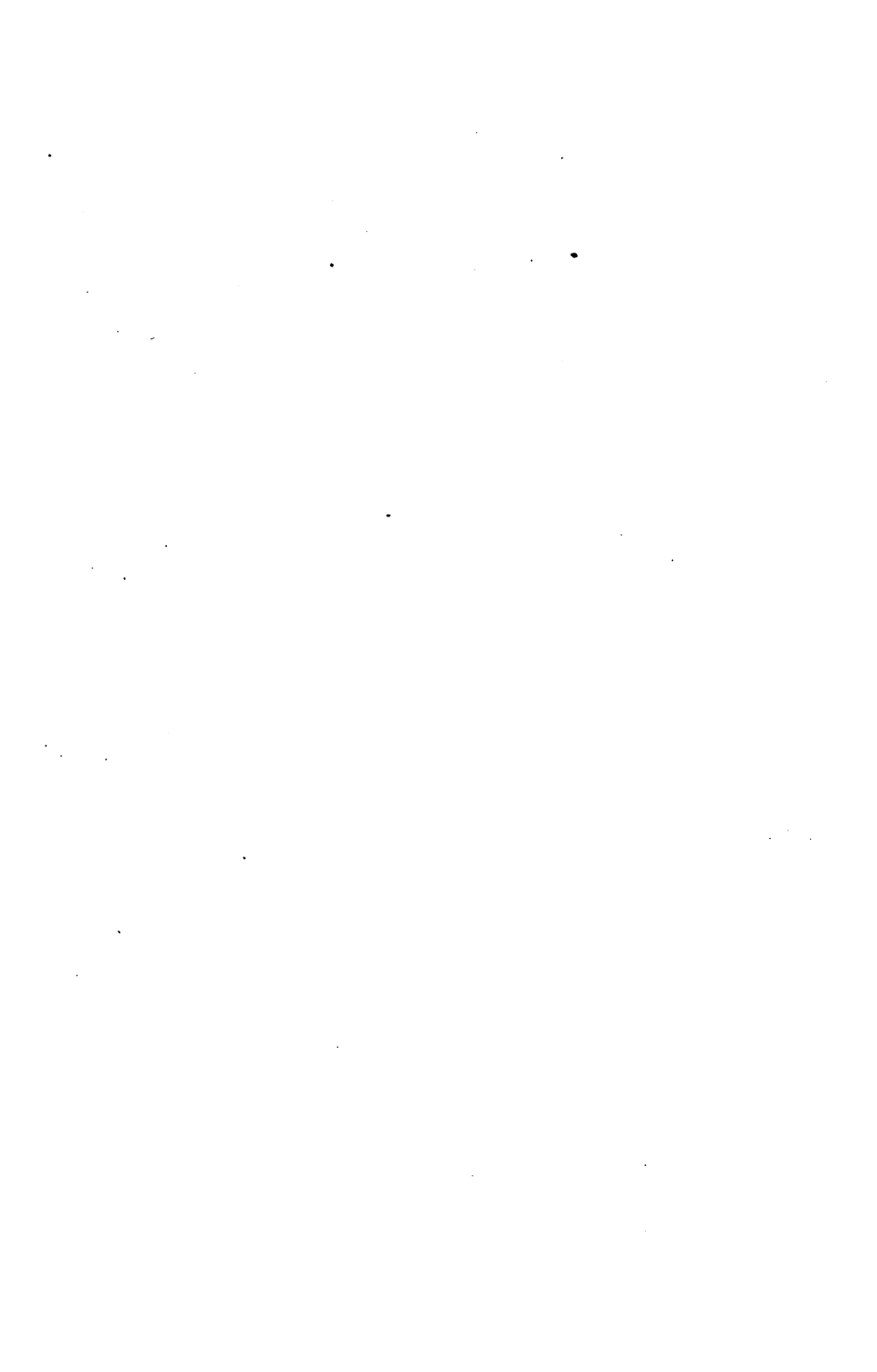
A SOCIALISTIC DEFENCE OF SOME  
ANCIENT INSTITUTIONS

BY  
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CH. CH. OXFORD

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METHUEN & Co.  
36 ESSEX STREET, W.C.  
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## P R E F A C E

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The Liberal Party has just met with a signal defeat at the polls. Yet no sane man can suppose that this defeat has set at rest for ever the controversy about the House of Lords, about Disestablishment, or on any other of the subjects which the Liberal leaders presented to the judgment of the electors. It cannot be doubted that the time will come when Parliament will again deal with all these questions. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that the Liberal Party should think carefully over its position with regard to them. Not, indeed, that any defeat whatever should make the party swerve, even in the smallest measure, from its principles. It would be better that Liberals should remain out of office for fifty years, than that they should, for example, abandon the policy of Irish Home Rule. And, above all, the Liberal Party must never shrink back from the open avowal, which it has made all through the days of Mr. Gladstone's leadership, of the doctrine that in politics considerations of Right and Wrong are to be regarded as supreme, and higher than all considerations, not only of commercial prosperity, but even of national safety. There are those who say that the moral and religious character, which—as the *Daily Chronicle* has well remarked—belongs to the later propaganda of Liberalism, has been the chief cause of the



party's losses. There seems no reason for believing that the majority of Liberals will adopt this view. On the contrary, it may reasonably be hoped that they will always recognise that the chief strength of Liberalism lies in its power to appeal to the religious convictions of liberal-minded Christians. There are, however, many minor matters upon which Liberals may without inconsistency change their opinions. It seems safe to prophesy that the party when it returns to power will not be less Socialistic than it is now; if, indeed, it has not left behind for good the whole of that system of Individualist doctrine which—though, no doubt, it helped to carry many important pieces of Liberal legislation—is, after all, but a theoretical excrescence of Liberalism, and not an essential part of it. It is, therefore, worth while to consider what application Socialistic principles may have to specifically social—as distinct from economic—problems. How, for example, do these principles bear on the questions of a Peerage and an Established Church?

The chief value of any such argument as that which is here attempted on the subject of social equality must be due to its shewing that the reasons commonly urged against the possibility of a general equality of all classes in society prove too much—prove, namely, the impossibility, for any class, of that kind of equality which, in spite of very great differences in wealth, birth, and intelligence, does actually exist in the upper class at the present time.



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# THE GREEK THEORY OF THE STATE

## AND THE

### NONCONFORMIST CONSCIENCE

#### CHAPTER I

#### INTRODUCTION

WE have become so much accustomed to draw sharp distinctions between the Hebraic and the Hellenic elements in modern thought, that it may at first sight seem strange to associate such a manifestly Hebrew force as the Nonconformist Conscience with the Greek theory of the State or of anything else. It is, however, the purpose of these pages, in the first place to maintain that the famous pronouncement of the English Dissenters on the subject of Mr. Parnell's leadership contained in embryo a theory of the State's function which cannot in its main outlines be distinguished from those which were held by Aristotle and Plato; and, secondly, to indicate some of the ways in which this Hellenic theory



may be applied to the solution of certain modern problems.

The words "Nonconformist Conscience" have contracted a special meaning. They are not used indiscriminately about all subjects upon which Nonconformists happen to have conscientious convictions. We use the phrase when we are speaking of the Nonconformists' demand for purity of life in public men, for municipal regulation of music-halls, or for vigorous administration in the local government of London; but we seldom or never say that it is the Nonconformist Conscience which demands the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church, although the majority of Nonconformists conscientiously believe that this measure is a strict requirement of justice. In fact, the use of the phrase has come to be confined to those subjects upon which the leading Nonconformists of to-day have deserted the Individualist doctrines of old-fashioned Nonconformity, and have adopted views which are closely allied to Socialism.

The two great rival theories of the Function of the State are the theory which was for so



many years dominant in England—which may for convenience be called the Individualist Theory—, and the theory which is stated most fully and powerfully by the Greek philosophers—which we may call the Socialist Theory. The Individualist Theory regards the State as a purely utilitarian institution, a mere means to an end. It teaches that people live in communities and become fellow-citizens solely for mutual advantage's sake. It represents the State as existing mainly for the protection of property and personal liberty, and as having therefore no concern with the private life and character of the citizen except in so far as these may make him dangerous to the material welfare of his neighbour. According to this view, if the State spends money on education, it must defend its action not on the high ground that education is valuable as moral training, but on some such lower ground as that it is preventive of crime.

The Greek theory, on the other hand, though it likewise regards the State as a means to certain ends, regards it as something more besides. According to the Greeks, fellow-citizenship is an



end in itself, and of value on its own account, just as friendship is; and the State has a directly moral function, being "an association for the sake of the Good" <sup>(1)</sup> and "for right living's sake" — in a word, the organ of our corporate moral life. The business of Politic <sup>(2)</sup>, the statesman's science, is, according to Aristotle, to lay down laws for all departments of human life, social, civil, domestic and personal. It is the practical Arch-Science, having under it all the other sciences which concern conduct, not only such sciences as Rhetoric and the Science of War, which are of direct usefulness towards the preservation of the community, but also the Science of Morals which deals with the private life of the individual. According to this theory no department of life is outside the scope of Politic; and a healthy state is at once the end at which the science aims, and the engine by which its decrees are carried out.

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<sup>(1)</sup> See Aristotle's Politics, IV. 3 (4), 1291, a. 18, where it is implied that a perfectly developed state as distinguished from the primitive city described by Socrates, is τοῦ καλοῦ χάριν συννεστηκυῖα; and compare Politics, I. 1 (2), 1252, b. 30.

<sup>(2)</sup> Nicomachean Ethics, I., 1 (2).



Between these two theories there are some very important differences. In the first place, the Individualist Theory makes the widest possible severance between politics and social life. Many an immoral man, whom we should refuse to receive in our own houses, can perform public duties faithfully and honestly. The Individualists, therefore, believing that the sole business of politics is that of protecting the citizen from material loss, will argue that so long as a man's immorality is not such as to prevent our trusting him to do the work which we require of him, it ought not to debar him from any political position. We must distinguish, they will say, between the different capacities in which a man may act; so that in our estimation of him in his public capacity no account ought to be had of what he does in his purely private capacity, the rules of social life, which compel us to exclude from our company the notorious evil liver, having no proper application to politics.

The Greek view is utterly opposed to the drawing of any such broad line of severance between public and private life. It puts all departments of life



into the closest connexion, treating them all, as we have seen, as the objects of one single science. Lightly to split a man up into a number of independent capacities is contrary to the Greek genius, which tends always towards Unification where Individualism tends towards Disunification. Nothing, for example, could be more at variance with the spirit of Aristotle or of Plato than that modern doctrine—which may be described perhaps as the Bohemian Theory of Society—which is in favour of making society as inorganic as possible by breaking it up into separate social rings—the “artistic world”, the “sporting world”, the “dramatic world”, the “religious world”, and so forth—of which each is to consider itself free to follow its own inclination independent of the judgment of society at large. A Greek would have regarded all such Individualism as leading directly to the dissolution of the community.

Secondly, then, while Individualism thus treats political relations as being purely relations of expediency, the Greek Theory treats them as falling into the class of moral relations. This difference is of great practical moment. If a



relation is a mere relation of expediency, all that one party to it can claim of another is that he shall fulfil his bargain. The best example, perhaps, that can be found in the whole world, of a purely commercial and non-moral relation is that which exists between a cabman and his passenger. As long as my cabman is doing what I have engaged him to do, I have no ground for dismissing him, even if I discover that he is the wickedest man within the Four Mile Circle. In the case of a moral relation, on the other hand, there is no question as to the fulfilment of a contract, but there are strict claims of a quite different kind. The relation between friend and friend, or between father and son, falls into the moral class; and here each party has a right to claim of the other a certain degree of conformity to the moral law. If a son behaves dishonourably, his father has a right to break off intimate relations with him on that ground alone, quite apart from any question of profit and loss. It is of great practical importance, then, to decide into which category political relations are to be put. If the Individualist is right, and political relations are of the non-moral sort,



then, besides being willing to be led by immoral leaders, we must also accept it as a general principle that to take account of the moral conduct of our fellow-citizen, except so far as it has material consequences, is no part of our political duty. If, however, the Greek theory is right, then the politician, as such, has an interest in moral conduct, not only because it leads to the prosperity of the community, but for its own sake. No disciple of Aristotle could have admitted for a moment that the consideration of the private life of the citizen fell outside the province of the statesman.

It is plain that on all these issues the Nonconformist Conscience is on the side of the Greeks. It has made the clearest protest against the unnatural theory which treats politics as something utterly apart from social life and the main body of human interests, and which teaches that what a man is in one capacity should have no bearing upon our estimation of him in another. The Nonconformists declared that political relations must, in some measure at least, submit to the rules of social life, and that they themselves could



never consent to accept as a leader a man whom it would not be right for them to meet in society. And though they acted simply as politicians—not on the ground that they had been personal acquaintances of Mr. Parnell, but as members of a party with which he was in alliance—their action was nevertheless guided by moral considerations throughout. It is evident, if we look at the matter from the point of view of mere expediency, that they had nothing to gain and much to lose by the course they took. Mr. Parnell was a man for whom, in spite of all that had happened, they could not but feel profound admiration; and his value to them as an ally was as great as it had ever been. The principle, then, upon which they acted, was that it is the duty of the politician, even when acting in his purely political capacity, to concern himself with questions of private morality, however much he may stand to lose by doing so.

And this doctrine is the root of the whole matter. If once we admit that, apart from any question of material loss or gain, the politician must see to the carrying out of the Moral Law



for morality's own sake, we are led by necessary steps to the full acceptance of that broad view of the politician's function which was held by Aristotle. The Moral Law claims to apply to the whole of human conduct. No sphere of action lies outside the scope of the laws of right and wrong. If, then, the carrying out of the Moral Law is to be the politician's supreme concern, so that he must aim at bringing about what is right simply on the ground of its rightness, then there is no kind of human undertaking with regard to which he is free from responsibility; he must cast his eyes over everything in which mankind engages; and Aristotle is right in making *Politica* the Arch-science under which all other practical sciences must fall. And to say that this wide responsibility belongs to the politician as such—that is, that it belongs to him in his capacity as servant of the State—is the same thing as saying that it belongs to the State itself.

It is clear that anyone, who accepts this theory of the State's function, is bound in consistency to demand that the State shall take measures towards acknowledging its obligations openly.



He will not necessarily ask, as the extreme Socialist does, that the State should take into its own hands all the means of production and distribution. Nor need he wish that every detail of our lives should be under the supervision of a public official. There are some matters with regard to which the State will best meet its responsibility by leaving them in the main to the control of private individuals, and taking official action at such times only as this is manifestly required. Where the line is to be drawn between what is left to the individual and what is ordered by the State, will best be decided by considering each particular case as it arises. But some people have taught that in certain spheres of action the State, even if it could interpose with good effect, ought to refuse to do so, on the ground that such interposition is entirely beside the purpose for which a State exists. With this opinion those who believe in the moral function of the State must totally disagree. If the State exists "for the sake of the good", then no good thing which it is in its power to do can be beyond its proper province. The natural means by which the State



will express its acceptance of this wide responsibility is to give some official sign of recognition to each one of the great divisions into which the legitimate interests of humanity are commonly regarded as falling—Art, Science, Social Life, Sport, Commerce, Religion, and so forth. The Nonconformists' theory of the State, then, will lead us to demand, not necessarily the full State-regulation, but certainly the clear State-recognition, of every healthy department of human activity. The methods by which such State-recognition is given will be discussed in the following Chapters.

It may be objected that this conclusion will not be one which Nonconformists will be eager to accept, even though it may be a fair deduction from their own premisses. It is true, no doubt, that there have been times when they have keenly resented the interference of the State in their concerns. It must not, however, be forgotten that there is a great difference between the views of the older and younger generations of Nonconformists on this subject. In almost every section of society it would seem to be the case that, while the great majority of the elder generation



are Individualists, a very large proportion of the younger people are calling themselves Socialists. And it is probable that in the Nonconformist Churches the separation between old and young is wider than elsewhere. This particular doctrine, however, of the far-reaching moral responsibility of the State is not wholly out of accord with the opinions even of the elder Nonconformity. It has been in a measure recognised in the protest which, before the present tendency towards Socialism had set in, the Nonconformists, in common with the rest of the religious world, have made against all plans for the State-regulation of Vice. However strong a case the supporters of such methods have been able to make out <sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) May it not be worth while to ask, by the way, whether there is good ground for the assumption, which is generally made, that it is impossible, without committing the State to a toleration of vice, to check the evils which it is sought to remedy by these methods? Does it pass the wit of man to frame a law which should bring severe punishment upon those whose vicious practices are such as must directly lead to the spread of evils of that kind, but which at the same time should not give even the appearance of sanction to vice practised under less dangerous conditions?



the answer of the religious world has always been that we ought to endure any evils whatsoever rather than allow the State to give countenance to vicious living, and to an institution which has no moral right to exist. Such a principle implies that the State has a moral responsibility similar to that of an individual. If the State were a mere machine working for our material well-being, then its sole concern in this matter would be to guard the public health. To say that it must at all costs refuse to give its approval to what is contrary to the Moral Law implies that it is something more than a machine. And it is hardly possible that anyone who has arrived at this point can be contented to stop there. If the State has moral responsibilities, these cannot be of a purely negative kind. If it is bound to withhold its approval from an institution which the Moral Law condemns, it is difficult to see upon what ground we can deny that it is equally bound to accord its approval to all those institutions which the Moral Law prescribes and enjoins as necessary to a healthy and fully developed community.



It will be seen, then, that the Aristotelian Theory of the State has closer affinities with the principles of the Nonconformist Conscience than might at first sight have been thought; and that consequently a man need not be regarded as a mere visionary if he ventures to hope that the Nonconformists may be willing to follow the lead of Aristotle, and to rise to something that more nearly approaches the thoroughness of Greek Socialism than does anything to which they have attained as yet. It is certainly not to be wished that, in becoming Socialists in their political views, they should cease to be the champions of that stern Individualism in personal religion which has been the special mark of Protestants. It is generally conceded that the noblest of human functions is the right exercise of Free Will, and since this of necessity belongs purely to the individual, it seems reasonable that we should still claim to be Individualists in the highest matters of all. But, while granting this, we may nevertheless allow that the State has moral obligations just as much as the individual has, and that these compel it, not merely to dis-



countenance immorality, but also to work for the active fulfilment of the Moral Law in all its branches. This doctrine in its general form the Nonconformists have already recognised. It is true that in some of its particular applications it may lead them into unaccustomed positions. Not even his bitterest enemy, however, can accuse the English Dissenter of any lack of that kind of courage which leads a man to accept to the full the results of a principle of the truth of which he has been convinced. And no one who knows the recent history of Nonconformity will say that Nonconformists have shewn themselves unable to escape from the bondage even of very long-standing prejudices. We have no right, then, to doubt that the Nonconformist Conscience is quite bold enough to follow out its premisses even to the most unwelcome conclusions.



## CHAPTER II

### THE HOUSE OF LORDS AND SOCIAL LIFE

THERE is, moreover, a special reason why the broad ideal of social life which is set forth by Aristotle should be commended to the contemplation of Nonconformists and other Liberals at the present time.

The Socialistic section of the Nonconformists is rapidly gathering to itself allies from outside the ranks of Nonconformity: and in this way a school of thought is being formed, the members of which, in spite of many minor differences of opinion, are in agreement both in Politics and in Religion upon what they would themselves consider to be the great fundamental principles. This School may be described, for want of a better name, as the "Daily Chronicle School," since the



most powerful exponent of its teaching is the *Daily Chronicle* newspaper.

It may be maintained with good reason that this newly formed party is one of the healthiest of the leavening forces which are at work in our modern society. Its members are certainly conspicuous among the members of other political and religious parties for a generous breadth of view. To pick out this school from all others as the one which most needs to be brought under the broadening influence of Aristotle's social theory may seem, therefore, at first sight to be the height of absurdity.

It is probable, however, that most people will, on reflection, be willing to admit that there is a certain defect, common to the great majority of Socialistic Nonconformists, and indeed of English Socialists in general, which is more likely to be corrected by continual familiarity with the doctrine that State-recognition should be given to all healthy departments of human activity than by any other means. This defect—which is due to peculiarities of temperament and education among those to whom Socialist views have commended themselves,



and which has clearly no essential connexion with their principles—may be roughly described as a Puritanical blindness to the value of what Aristotle calls Magnificence. The English Socialist, even if he is a Nonconformist, is not Puritanical in all things. His views on Art and on public amusement are sufficiently liberal. He wishes, for example, to control the Music Hall and not to suppress it. His ideal, however, of social existence falls at present far short of that harmonious and well-furnished life which is set up as our model in the Nicomachean Ethics. In applying Aristotle's ideal to our present state of society, we must, of course, make due allowance for the necessary differences between a Greek City and a Teutonic Kingdom. But the ordinary Socialist sets no such ideal before himself. There are many things needful to a full and well-furnished life, as it would be conceived by a modern Englishman, upon which the Socialist looks coldly. Take, for example, Sport, and what we may call—in slightly archaic phrase—High Fashion. Mr. Charles Gore <sup>(1)</sup> has

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<sup>(1)</sup> "The Social Doctrine of the Sermon on the Mount," p. 13. Percival & Co. 1893.



said that Christians ought to make "a strenuous opposition to the development of luxury, as distinct from knowledge and beauty"; and with this sentiment as it stands all right thinking people must agree. The danger, however, lies in the manner in which the word 'beauty' will be interpreted. Most Socialists, and probably Mr. Gore himself among them, will interpret his principle in such a sense as to condemn both Fashion and Sport.

Yet on full consideration of the matter such a condemnation can hardly seem reasonable to anyone. Sport and Fashion certainly add to the richness and variety of life, and may so claim to add to its beauty. And indeed what we have to deal with is not so much hostility to these pursuits as want of interest in them. The Socialist condemns them as useless luxury, rather because he has himself no sense of their value than because he has any active quarrel against them. If it were once clearly recognised as the duty of the State to decide sharply between the legitimate and the illegitimate branches of human activity, there are few who would deliberately treat either Sport or Fashion as illegitimate. To condemn absolutely



such an almost universal instinct as the sporting instinct would be felt to be akin to the fanatical puritanism which has in some ages passed a similar condemnation upon other of our natural passions and appetites. Unless we hold that all these are to be defended solely on grounds of utility <sup>(1)</sup>, and refuse to regard them as necessary to the ethical completeness of human nature, we can hardly fail to perceive that the sporting instinct stands on the same ground as others which we are not willing to condemn. We may denounce it as bestial; and it is true that it belongs to the lower and animal side of us: but

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(1) Utilitarian philosophy and Socialism have no natural affinities; and it is worth adding that puritanical narrowness of sympathy sits less well upon the Socialist than upon anyone else: since as Socialists we attempt to prescribe the course the State shall take with regard to the pursuits of our neighbours.

The argument against sport based on the pain inflicted upon animals will be seen to be a weak one, if we consider how many more people can gain health and pleasure from the death of one fox than can gain them from the death, which we all approve, of one chicken or turkey. The death of the fox is probably the less painful of the two, and certainly the less ignominious.



are we to cease to indulge every passion of which the same could be said? A similar argument may be used against the total condemnation of Fashion. It may fairly be claimed that High Fashion, as practised by such a man as Lord Chesterfield, has a right to a rank among the Fine Arts at least as high as that which we assign to the art, let us say, of the *Comédie Française*: and there is no reason why the former, any more than the latter, should be regarded as necessarily bound up with worldliness, selfishness, or pride. It is true that Lord Chesterfield's presentation of his ideal reveals in many points the low moral tone of its author; but this has no essential connexion with the ideal itself; and, unless we despise the graces of life altogether, we shall be constrained to admit that there is a distinct ethical value in the exacting standard of good manners which this writer sets up. The difference, throughout one large sphere of behaviour, between the bearing of a Lord Chesterfield on the one hand, and that of the majority even of well educated men on the other, may be compared to the difference between the finish, delicacy, and restraint, of a consummate



artist and the careless daubing of a vulgar scene-painter. However far, then, the greater part of fashionable people have at all times fallen short of the standard of Lord Chesterfield, it is yet hardly likely to be seriously denied, if the matter is once fairly faced, that society would be in some respects the poorer if the World of Fashion ceased absolutely to exist. Let us suppose even, that we had realised the hopes of the most enthusiastic kind of Socialists; that we had been able to withdraw our countrymen wholly from the degrading influences of industrial competition; that all our workers had been planted out on the land and were earning a sufficient livelihood by their labour; and moreover that our public education had done its work so well that the humblest of us could read our Homers and our Virgils at our cottage doors at the close of our eight hours' toil. Even in such healthy and delightful social circumstances as these, the existence of High Society in some form would be a gain to the community. In a country where no one had command of more than moderate resources, we could hardly expect to develop the



consummate man of fashion; and the extinction of Fashion would be equivalent, as we have seen, to the extinction of one of the Arts. Moreover, if we had no High Society, the several districts of the country would be cut off, far more than they now are, from social intercourse with one another. It was held that the member of a Greek city ought to be personally acquainted with each of his fellow-citizens <sup>(1)</sup>. The only approximation to such a state of things which is possible in modern Europe is that everyone should be able, in ordinary circumstances, to get an introduction to any one of his fellow-citizens if he wishes it. But if even as much as this is to be attained, as everyone who desires the State to be a truly organic body will wish it may be, there must exist among us some circle of society which is not local or provincial, but central. It is not unreasonable then, to hope that the thoughtful Socialist may be brought to regard High Society as one of the necessary institutions of a perfect community,—and that, the more clearly he perceives it to be the State's duty to give official

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<sup>(1)</sup> Politics: Book VII, 4. 1326. b. 14—24.



recognition to all legitimate human pursuits, the less he may allow his private narrownesses of taste to warp his social theory.

Meanwhile, however, the lack of interest which our most earnest social reformers exhibit towards one whole side of human life is a fact to be reckoned with. It is a fact, too, of direct practical importance at this moment: since it has a manifest bearing upon the present controversy concerning the House of Lords. That any sincere believer in popular government should be contented to leave matters as they now stand is, of course, not to be expected: and Liberals cannot reasonably ask for a less measure of change than that the House of Lords shall be deprived of the power it now possesses of thwarting the deliberate will of the House of Commons. But many Liberals ask for much greater changes than this. A member of Her Majesty's late Government recently said that it is in his opinion desirable that the Sovereign should cease to create new peers. Other public speakers often express the same sentiment; and it is almost always received with cheering. Yet it is open to doubt whether in



most cases the people who give their assent to such proposals know of any harm which the mere existence of a Peerage—apart from its legislative Powers—can be supposed to do to the cause of Liberalism, of Democracy, of Socialism, or any other good cause. It is probable that if a desire is felt by any large section of the community for the legal abolition of the Peerage, it is due much more to a belief that there is nothing that can be said in favour of such an institution than to a clear conviction that there is anything in particular that can be said against it.

It may, then, be of some service at the present time, not merely to appeal to Socialists to broaden their views of life in general, but also to shew reasons for thinking that the Peerage in particular is one of the means by which, if it is properly handled, we can put into practice in modern England something of the Socialistic ideal of the Greeks: and that consequently it is possible to defend, on grounds which Socialists will accept, the policy of dealing gently with the House of Lords, and making only that necessary amount



of change in its constitution which is required for the safety of democratic government. If it can be shewn that the House of Lords is an institution by means of which we are not only able to give State-recognition to Social Life but are also able in some degree to put Social Life under State control; and moreover that the existence of the House of Lords in the past has tended towards drawing social and political life closely together, and in general, towards preventing society from becoming a mere aggregate of isolated groups; it ought not in that case to be difficult to persuade the Nonconformist Conscience, which has protested against the doctrine that Politics and Social Life are best kept apart, that the House of Lords has performed some services to humanity for which it deserves our gratitude; nor ought it to be difficult to persuade Socialists of any school that, if the attack on the House of Lords is made with too great violence, we may some day discover that we have thoughtlessly destroyed an instrument which in the hands of a Socialistic Government might have been turned to good account.

In what way the House of Lords has been a



link between the State and Social Life it is not difficult to perceive. The persons who compose the House of Lords belong to the class from which, whether there were any House of Lords or not, our leaders in social life would, as matters now stand, be taken. And as long as there exists a Peerage recognised by the State,—as long as the Head of the State is also the fountain of social honour—so long the State will have a certain control over the social position of its citizens. As things are at present in England, the Sovereign exercises a very powerful influence in this matter. If a man is raised to the Peerage, this ensures to him, at least in ordinary circumstances, a certain recognition at the hands of Society. And it is clear that the bestowal of peerages has had no inconsiderable effect on the social position, not only of individuals, but, through them, of whole classes too. There is much less separation now than formerly between the Great Middle Class and the class which alone was dominant in society in earlier days: and no one can doubt that this is partly due to the fact that the Sovereign has given social recognition to



some members of the trading class by putting them in the House of Lords. Again, the fact that the leaders of the clerical and legal professions and the leading military and naval men have their place in the House of Lords has had a somewhat similar effect. By giving to the heads of these professions a clear position in what we may most justly call Central Society, we keep the professions in touch with the general current of social life and with one another.

All this tends to make High Society a unifying agency in social life. The more High Society is kept in touch with all departments of life, and the more fully all professions and interests are represented in it, the greater will be the community of thought and manners among the various social classes, and the less will it be possible for any class to stand entirely apart from others—as in some places the middle class has done—with its own ways of thought and speech and its own peculiar manners and customs. There is, of course, much in social life which must always depend upon the private wishes of individuals, and which cannot be affected by anything that



is done by public authority. But still, unless a very marked change comes over English Society, or unless there are peculiar circumstances in some special case, we may take it as certain that the mere fact of being raised to the Peerage will always by itself give a man that undisputed position in general society which those who have received the same honour have been able to claim in the past. And so long as the present practice is continued of creating new peers under each administration, it would seem that the Crown and its advisers, if acting with due caution, will be able to prevent Society from losing the representative character which it now possesses, and to ensure its continual renewal by the introduction of new blood. That the political chiefs of the nation should have this influence over Society is not by any means to be regarded as a matter of course. In some countries there are, as everyone knows, aristocracies of birth which at times are unwilling to open their doors to nobles of new creation. But, fortunately, the kind of pride which is responsible for the invention of such a phrase as '*noblesse de ghetto*' does not seem to be a



very great force in any circle of English society. It is, on the whole, foreign to our national character. We may be pretty sure, then, that the State will be able to maintain its present measure of control over social life unless it chooses voluntarily to surrender it.

And is there any good reason why the State should abdicate its social authority?

It may be argued by some people that no process of social unification which can be carried out by means of the Peerage could ever go far enough to satisfy the demands of any whole-hearted Socialist; and that the only effect of such methods will be to blind us to the need of more thorough-going reform. It will be said that though in the ordinary course of events we may reasonably hope to see the absorption of the middle class by the old upper class proceeding more rapidly in the future even than it proceeds at present <sup>(1)</sup>,

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(<sup>1</sup>) In a translation of Molière's Plays made in the last century, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* is rendered 'The Cit turned Gentleman.' The fact that the words could not be translated into modern English at all shews how much fainter is our sense of class distinctions now than it was a hundred years ago.



yet nothing less than a social revolution can have any good effect upon the position of the manual labourers who are the largest and most important class of all.

If this opinion is sound, it is clear that the objection based upon it is a most serious one. Not only every Socialist but every Christian, whose Christianity is more than nominal, must feel that the utter exclusion from society of the great majority of the population is an evil which we ought to spare no pains to put an end to. This is one of the matters upon which modern Socialism must advance beyond the Socialism of the Greeks. A Christian cannot be contented, as a Greek was contented, that men who benefit the community by their labour should have no share in its social life. It is true that many good people—especially many good women—dread the results which they believe would follow from the levelling of ranks: but this feeling is due mainly to confusion of thought. Sensitive people who have suffered annoyance from the familiarities of vulgar strangers fancy that, if we lived under conditions of social equality, they would have no protection against



such insolence and that we should all have to sink to the same level of ill-breeding. Reflection, however, would probably convince them that the courtesy which makes a man forbear to take liberties with those with whom he is not intimately acquainted may exist as naturally amid a general equality of ranks as under any other social conditions. And anyone, moreover, who is aware by his own experience of the benefits which follow from an assured position in society, ought to be able to perceive that it is on Christian principles a plain duty to extend those benefits as widely as possible. Thus we should, no doubt, have a good argument in favour of revolutionary reforms, if it were really true that all gentler methods must leave the great mass of the people outside their scope.

But is there any reason for thinking that this is the case? It is argued that no social equality will be possible between the members of the labouring class and of the higher classes, till we have done away with the present great inequalities in wealth, leisure, education, and security of livelihood—a work, it is said, which nothing short of



an industrial revolution can accomplish. To this it may be answered, in the first place, that the worst of the disadvantages from which the labouring class suffers are already being removed by the action of the Trades Unions, and moreover that it is within the power of the State even to give permanence of tenure to the occupier of land without completely nationalising the land or abolishing the landlord. Secondly, it should be pointed out that—as experience has quite plainly shewn—neither equality of wealth nor equality of education are necessary to our meeting on equal terms in society. In the upper class at any rate, men who stand at the very opposite ends of the scale in the matter of fortune, or birth, or intelligence, are able to meet as equals at the same table, and even to marry into one another's families; and not only is it considered a point of courtesy to ignore in common intercourse these and all similar differences, but the practice of treating with equal consideration every one whom he meets in society is a practice into which the well-bred man falls quite naturally and without effort.



Inequalities of wealth or intellect have much less to do with social inequality than is commonly assumed. The income of the artisan is sometimes quite as high as the income of the curate. The curate, it is true, cannot make any great figure in society; but nevertheless, if the artisan had within his reach a position no worse than his, some of our social problems would be in a fair way towards solution. Again, with regard to education, we may be pretty sure that many a great lady has held her own in the world with no better intellectual equipment than is now possessed by hundreds of working men. The gradual absorption, then, of the lower class by the upper ought not to be regarded as a physical impossibility -even in such an industrial state as may be attained to without revolution. That there are some conditions which a man must fulfil before he can be fit for a place in society is not to be denied. The first condition is willingness to conform to social laws. Another is the possession of a certain undefinable quality which in its fullest development may be regarded rather as the product of assured social position than as a condition to



enjoying it. It is certain, nevertheless, that in the past the upper class has been continually added to from below; and there seems to be no reason why the same process should not still be carried on.

Why, then, might not the Peerage play the same part in raising the position of the labourer that it has already played in raising the position of the manufacturer? Lord Meath, writing in the *Nineteenth Century* <sup>(1)</sup> suggests that peerages should be conferred upon the leading Nonconformist Ministers. For this proposal there is, manifestly, much to be said. But there are men who are quite as truly the accepted leaders of the labouring class as the rich trader and the Nonconformist preacher are the accepted leaders of the middle class. Is there any intrinsic absurdity in the thought of a peerage conferred upon a Labour-leader?

It may be said that a Labour-leader would not venture to accept a peerage, and that a Minister of the Crown would not venture to offer it to him, from fear that their action should be condemned

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<sup>(1)</sup> February 1895, page 202.



by public opinion. Some people, no doubt, would be ready to assert that to make a labouring man a peer could only serve to lower the general estimation in which the Peerage is held. There is certainly a risk that the Peerage will be brought into contempt, whenever peers are made recklessly, especially if the honour is given in return for services which have consisted mainly in subscribing money for the needs of a political party. But such a case ought not to be compared to that of a Labour-leader, whose services are of a kind far more worthy of public recognition. Moreover, however high an opinion we may hold of the benefits conferred upon the community by private wealth, we can hardly deny that it is desirable to shew very clearly that the possession of wealth ought not to be a general pre-requisite to high social position. The great Labour-leader must necessarily be a man of some intellectual distinction. The example, too, of certain eminent ecclesiastics of past days proves that men of low birth are not always destitute of the gifts which belong to the social, as distinct from the political, leader. If we say, then, that Labour-leaders as



a class are unfit to be made peers, it is hard to see upon what we can base this assertion except upon the mere fact that they are poor. It may be maintained, perhaps, that the labouring class itself would be displeased at seeing its leaders receive such an unaccustomed honour, that it would be felt that for a labourer to take a peerage was equivalent to his taking a bribe from the Government to desert the cause of the people, and so forth. Such a sentiment, however, could only be expressed by the most thoughtless kind of demagogue. In these democratic days the working man no longer regards the Government as his natural enemy; he regards it rather as his servant: and he would be well aware that in the supposed case the peerage had been given simply in acknowledgment of services by which he was himself a gainer. It ought not, then, too hastily to be taken for granted that the influence of the Crown over Society can in no conceivable circumstances be used for the direct benefit of the labouring class.

That the process of social unification which is



here sketched, is not likely to be a very rapid one, must be admitted. But is it certain that more revolutionary methods of attaining the same end can command speedier success? And, in any case, is it not wise to take care that we do not enter upon a course of political action which will make our social conditions worse than they already are? There can be no more unpleasant spectacle for a Socialist, or indeed for any patriotic person, than that of a High Society living solely for its pleasures and holding itself contemptuously aloof from politics. Such a Society will regard social matters as its own private concern with which the outer world has nothing to do; and the community in which it exists will resemble the City described by Plato <sup>(1)</sup> which is not in truth one city at all, but two mutually hostile cities. An upper class, whether large or small, wealthy or impoverished, must always have a certain weight and importance; and if alienated from sympathy with the general life of the community must be a dangerous foe for a State to have in its midst, even if its enmity expresses itself only in silent disdain.

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(<sup>1</sup>) Plato. Republic. 422E.



From social disintegration of this kind we are at present protected by our institutions. So long as the laws of precedence have parliamentary authority, they cannot be regarded as a purely private affair. And so long as men of such various types as the landowner, the poet, the manufacturer, the clergyman, the man of science, the politician, meet on the common ground of Society and the House of Lords, it will be impossible, as we have seen, for the World of Fashion to stand apart from politics and the current of general human interests. While this state of things lasts we may feel sure that political eminence will continue to confer high social position, and that the most eminent persons in Society will still wish to distinguish themselves in public life. But is it not conceivable that some of the more violent constitutional changes which have been proposed might have the effect of destroying these friendly relations between Society and the State? There certainly exists in some quarters a desire to withdraw from public control everything which on any pretext can be regarded as a private matter. This tendency is



exhibited in its wildest form by that extreme type of Bohemian who condemns marriage on the ground that the union between man and woman is too holy a thing to depend in any measure upon State-sanction. The same contempt of the State is shewn in a less degree by those who think their personal eminence or the dignity of their family too great to allow them to accept a knighthood or a baronetcy. It would seem natural that it should be looked upon as an act of bad citizenship to despise even the humblest honour conferred by the Head of the State. But, strangely enough, there are some people who treat these refusals as heroic.

It can hardly, however, be seriously maintained that the State will do wisely in making concessions to this Bohemian spirit. Yet is not that the very thing which the State would be doing if it deprived itself of its powers over Society? If it were made known that the Sovereign would create no more peers, this would be equivalent to a formal declaration that the social standing of the citizen is a matter which concerns individuals only and not the community at large. To the majority of



people social relations must always be matters of great importance. It could not, then, heighten public estimation of the State's office that it should become wholly powerless to control these relations. Another effect of the change would be to confirm the false opinion that hereditary rank is of the nature of a private possession. The Socialist ought to be in an especial degree eager to remind the world that hereditary rank is simply an honour granted by the State, and not a private possession at all. The true view of the matter, however, would be hopelessly obscured for most minds if once the State left off concerning itself with social rank. And besides this, as soon as ever additions to the Peerage ceased to be made, a very strong temptation would be put upon the members of those families the heads of which had been already ennobled, to regard themselves as belonging to a distinct noble class separated by an impassable barrier from all other classes. We might find, therefore, if not at once, at any rate in a few generations' time, that we had come nearer than ever Englishmen have come in the course of their



history to the establishment of a Nobility after the Continental model.

A somewhat similar result might be expected to follow from the suppression of the principle of heredity. While all peers would be merely life-peers in the eye of the State, Society would inevitably recognise, in the case of the peerages which had been originally hereditary, the succession of the son to his father's title. Thus there would almost necessarily grow up an invidious distinction between birth-peers and State-peers, and a clearly marked divergence of view between the State and Society. We can imagine how the fashionable world of New York would regard political peers created by the President of the United States. But the American feeling on these matters is not a thing which we can wish to introduce into England.

But is there not, then, it may be asked, reason to fear that mischievous results, similar to those which have been described, may follow that constitutional change which is now being demanded by the Liberal Party? It will be contended, perhaps, that if the House of Lords became powerless to



resist the House of Commons it would suffer an intolerable loss of dignity. Is it not, however, more reasonable to believe that the House of Lords would rather gain dignity by the change than lose it? In present circumstances the House cannot put forward its whole opinion on any important question, but only so much of its opinion as it thinks it may safely express without the risk of having presently to eat its own words. From this undignified position the House of Lords would escape, if it surrendered its power to resist, and retained only its power to advise. And if, as has been suggested in high quarters, this change in the Constitution were accompanied by the removal of the disability which forbids a peer to sit in the House of Commons, it is plain that the individual members of the House of Lords would gain even more than the House as a whole. If, on the other hand, we urge its complete abolition as a House of Parliament or any of those more violent measures of change which have been already spoken of, we run an evident risk of destroying its social usefulness without gaining any political advantage in compensation.



There are some Liberals, no doubt, whose quarrel with the House of Lords is based upon grounds of principle quite unconnected with those which have here been discussed. It is alleged, for example, that the English are a nation of snobs, and that the existence of the Peerage has contributed towards making them so. The snob may be defined, perhaps, as the man who cannot recognise true worth till it has been distinguished for him by some outward and visible sign: and it may be argued that, as State-honours are sometimes conferred for unworthy reasons, the snob is in danger of being led to admire what is not really admirable. The fact, however, that outward marks of honour are capable of abuse does not prove that they are mischievous universally. Moreover, arguments of this kind are seldom employed with perfect consistency. If rank is conferred by the Sovereign upon a man of genius, we are asked in fine scorn whether we really think that a heaven-born poet is exalted by being put in the House of Lords. But if we erect the poet's effigy in marble, no fault is found with us, although this is just as much a mere



outward recognition of merit as the other. In all these matters, it is exceedingly important to clear the mind of cant.

Some people, again, disapprove on principle the hereditary transmission of rank. They complain that it is unjust that a man should be honoured for services which he had himself no hand in performing. This objection, however, it is clear, comes more fittingly from the mouth of an old-fashioned Individualist than from that of the Socialistic Liberal of to-day. Those who have learned to recognise the corporate unity of the State can hardly fail to perceive the corporate unity of the Family <sup>(1)</sup>.

Others, again, contend that to allow the existence

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(<sup>1</sup>) It may be argued with some show of justice that if a family can rightly receive honour for the good services of its founder, this honour may rightly be taken away for the bad conduct of his successors; and that thus a rigorous system of degradation is the proper complement of the hereditary principle. Such a system, however—though it would have the good effect of correcting the delusion that rank is a species of private property—would be exceedingly difficult to carry out. The State might not find it easy to induce the degraded nobleman to alter his visiting cards. Yet the principle seems sound.



of ranks is to surrender the fundamental democratic principle of Equality. We must not, however, confound that baneful inequality of classes, which denies to the members of one class the right to associate on equal terms with the members of another, with the comparatively harmless inequalities between individuals or families. The former kind of inequality it must be the aim of the Socialist to remedy: the latter kind must continue as long as the world stands. And, in actual practice, the Peerage tends rather to reduce inequalities than to augment them. Pride of rank may sometimes act as a healthy corrective to pride of lineage, on the one hand, and to pride of purse, on the other. One man, let us suppose, is a peer, while his neighbour is not. But then the latter, perhaps, is the owner of wide lands held by his ancestors since the Conquest, while the former in comparison is poor and does not know the history of his own great-grandfather. Thus by virtue of his title the poor man of humble descent stands more level than he might otherwise do with his wealthy and highborn neighbour. And, similarly, if we could sweep



away not only all titles of nobility but all respect for high birth along with them, the chief result would be to exalt the position of the plutocrat. If pre-eminence in wealth and in natural gifts became the only pre-eminences possible to us, it is manifest that social inequalities would be more cruel and more keenly felt than they are now, when pre-eminence of these kinds in one man is balanced by pre-eminence of rank or family in another.

If then we look fairly at this matter in all its aspects, is it not possible that we may come to the conclusion that the general effect of the House of Lords upon the life of the Community is widely different from what it is commonly supposed to be; and that to demand more than that necessary measure of reform, to which the Liberal Party is already pledged, is—from the point of view at least of that Socialistic-Liberalism, which is now in the ascendant—an act of political shortsightedness?



## CHAPTER III

### THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH

THE same general principle which has thus been applied to the case of the House of Lords may be applied also to that of the Established Church<sup>(1)</sup>.

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(1) The question of Welsh Disestablishment should be considered separately from the question of Disestablishment in general. There are peculiar circumstances in the case; and we may believe firmly in the value of the recognition of Religion by the State, without wishing to go so far as to force an Established Church upon an unwilling people.

It is much to be regretted that in the whole controversy the question of Endowment has been made so much more prominent than that of Establishment. It is surely a sordid view which regards Endowment as the more important matter of the two. The Established Church gains much in stateliness from her large revenues, but would it not be a plain duty to surrender all advantages of this kind, if it were shewn that this very mag-



If Politic, the Statesman's Science, has to do with all branches of human conduct, it has to do with Religion. Those, at least, who believe that Religion is necessary to the full moral development of our nature, and who believe also that to seek the moral welfare of the citizen is part of the State's function, must admit, as a necessary conclusion, that the right to concern itself with religious matters is a right to which the State is bound to lay claim. This claim the State makes wherever there exists an Established Church: for by this means the State professes itself the Church's patron, and State-patronage will necessarily lead to some measure of State-control.

The demand for the disestablishment of the Church of England may be based on either of two quite distinct grounds. It may be based upon a denial of this general principle that the State has a right to concern itself with Religion: or it may be based upon the assertion that certain specific evils have followed from those relations

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nificence is likely to be a permanent offence to the consciences of Christians of other denominations?



between Church and State which exist in this country.

I. If the Nonconformist urges the general principle that the State, as such, is unfit to deal with religious matters, it is not difficult to convict him of the appearance, at least, of inconsistency. The opinions which he expresses, when speaking not only of the qualities necessary to a political leader but on almost any other political question, seem to imply a singularly high view of the State's office, the view, namely, that the State is, in the words of St. Paul, the "minister of God to us for good." When, however, he turns to the subject of the Established Church, his whole point of view seems to change; and he begins to speak as if the State were a power of evil from whose unholy tyranny religion must be at all costs set free.

This general disapproval of the intervention of the State in what concerns religion is sometimes expressed in the epigram that "spiritual things should be dealt with by spiritual persons." That the principle should be stated in more for-



cible words than these seems hardly possible. This, then, may be the best form in which to consider it.

We must ask, in the first place, what is here meant by spiritual things. Used in this connexion the phrase can mean nothing else than that religious matters are spiritual and must be dealt with by the Church, while merely political matters are unspiritual and can be safely left to the State. But in what sense are these latter unspiritual? The leading Nonconformists have for some years past been teaching that certain distinctly political questions, such as those of the housing of the poor and the water supply of London, cannot be rightly solved except by the direct application to them of the fundamental principles of Christianity. Now it is clear that a matter which cannot be rightly understood except by those who approach it in a Christian spirit must be a spiritual matter. Yet the Nonconformists have never wished to deprive the State of its power to deal with business of this sort. What, then, becomes of the assertion that the



State is unfit to concern itself with spiritual things?

It may be argued perhaps, that the word 'spiritual' is to be here understood as equivalent to 'theological', and that what Nonconformists feel so strongly is that the State is not competent to deal with theology. It is often said that no assembly could be less well fitted to settle theological disputes than the House of Commons. To this objection it may fairly be answered that theological debates in the House of Commons are no necessary consequence of an established Church. But is it even true that the House of Commons stands at greater disadvantage with regard to theology than any other legislative assembly, ecclesiastical or civil? No legislative assembly, as such, can settle theological controversies. These may be settled if the reasonings of the assembled theologians can command the general assent of Christians: but they cannot be settled by voting or by passing resolutions. And if the question is not of settling theological doctrines, but of taking action on some practical matter relating to doctrines—such, for example,



as the treatment of an heretical person who does not hold them—is it not possible that the House of Commons is quite as well fitted for this work as many ecclesiastical assemblies are? There are, perhaps, few ecclesiastical assemblies which could be trusted to treat a heretic with as much Christian generosity and good sense as he might expect to meet with from the House of Commons. Moreover, as we have already seen, the Nonconformists admit the right of Parliament to put into practice those fundamental moral doctrines of the Christian religion which are generally reckoned to rank higher even than the doctrines of theology. Thus, then, however much we may allow that there are some subjects which Parliament will be wise in excluding from its debates, we ought not to say that this is done because these matters are too spiritual for it to touch.

And what again, we may ask, is to be understood by “spiritual persons”? If the meaning were that the persons who deal with spiritual things should be spiritually minded, it might be answered not only that this is true, but that the principle could



well be extended to all things whether spiritual or not. That either everyone in authority should become spiritually minded, or all spiritually minded men should come to positions of authority, would be a Christian reading of Plato's hope that either the kings might become philosophers, or the philosophers kings. But there is no system of government by which this hope could be made sure to us either in Church or State. And this is not in the least what is meant by the phrase "spiritual persons" when it is said as an argument for the disestablishment of the Church, that these persons alone should deal with spiritual matters. The meaning is merely that religious affairs should be dealt with by the members or representatives of religious bodies. But to call such peoplespiritual in virtue of their office and independently of their personal spirituality, is more in accordance with the principles of the High Churchman than of the Nonconformist. The High Churchman sometimes makes very subtle distinctions on these points. He will, for example, deny the title of spiritual to a Court of Bishops if constituted by a modern act of Parliament, whereas he would



allow that the very same men were a spiritual Court if they sat in obedience to some ancient custom of the Church. The Nonconformist is ready to express surprise that anything so remote from the personal spirituality of the judges, as the kind of law under which their court is constituted, should be supposed to affect its spiritual value. But does he not himself take up a very similar position when he demands that religious affairs shall always be brought before a nominally religious assembly? The question, surely, which anyone will ask who looks rather to realities than to words, is not whether an assembly calls itself religious, but whether there is good reason to hope that it will receive divine guidance. That meetings which were spiritual in name, whether great Councils of Bishops or the small Church-meetings of local communities, have not always acted in accordance with divine guidance, we know well enough. Their religious title, then, gives us no security. With regard to the House of Commons on the other hand, there are on democratic principles much better grounds of confidence. No religious man who has accepted these principles can say



that divine guidance is denied to the general body of the people, in whose name the House of Commons speaks. The whole argument for popular government is based on the belief that the nation at large is more likely to judge right in matters of public conduct than any small group even of the most saintly and enlightened individuals. It seems strange, then, that any Liberal should doubt the fitness of the House of Commons to perform such religious duties as are in present circumstances required of it.

It is said sometimes that Parliament is an unspiritual body, because it must confessedly decide all questions on grounds of public expediency, whereas the Church will decide them on grounds of right and wrong. In such a view of politics the Nonconformist, as we have seen, cannot acquiesce: nor has it any foundation in fact. Both Houses of Parliament, in opening their meetings with prayer, declare that their aim is to seek the advancement of God's glory. No religious meeting could make a higher profession: and we have only to look at the humanitarian legislation of the last sixty years to see that in actual practice



Parliament is not ruled in the main by unworthy motives. Mr. Kidd, in *Social Evolution*, seems to have made good his contention that the great political changes which have taken place in that time have been brought about not by selfishness but by Christian charity. Moreover, the State exercises no such tyranny over the Established Church, as is sometimes supposed; as, indeed, may be perceived by anyone who will look at facts as they are, instead of seeing them through a veil of rhetorical generalities: and the history both of the Evangelical Movement and of the Oxford Movement shews clearly that its connexion with the State does not necessarily quench the Church's spiritual life.

The doctrine, however, of the State's unfitness to deal with religion is seldom grounded upon particular facts. And if it is grounded upon the general principle that spiritual things belong to spiritual persons, it is fair, as we have seen, to object that this application of the principle implies an exceedingly low view of politics, since it implies that political matters are of so little importance that they may be entrusted to the



hands of unspiritual men. This sharp division, too, between the spiritual and the unspiritual, the sacred, and the secular, is another example of that disunifying tendency which we have found to be a mark of individualist thought.

A further argument which is sometimes urged against Established Churches, is that they are contrary to the Scriptural principle that God's kingdom is not of this world <sup>(1)</sup>. But these words, instead of being taken to forbid the subordination of ecclesiastical societies to the State, may be much more naturally interpreted as a warning against confounding such societies with the Church in its higher sense. The Kingdom of God which comes not with observation <sup>(2)</sup>, which cannot be said to be here or to be there, is plainly not the same thing as an ecclesiastical society, whose members might be counted, which can collect money, and hold and administer property. To say that such a visibly organized community as the latter, whether it be on a large scale or a small, is not of this

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<sup>(1)</sup> St. John, xviii, 36.

<sup>(2)</sup> St. Luke, xvii, 20.



world, would seem to be nothing less than a violation of language <sup>(1)</sup>. An ecclesiastical community may be an outward organ of God's invisible kingdom, and so too may a civil community; as indeed may be said to be the case with all the States and all the Churches of Christendom: but what ground is there for denying that any community of either kind is of the world?

The position here defended is not that of the extreme Erastian who regards the Church as a mere State-department <sup>(2)</sup>. The relations between

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(<sup>1</sup>) It is sometimes said that the Church is a spiritual society and excommunication its spiritual weapon. The power to convince and to persuade might reasonably be spoken of as spiritual. But if excommunication is used as a means to enforce obedience when persuasion has failed, it can produce no result unless it causes annoyance of some kind to the excommunicated person. Unless it does this it is no weapon at all. But if it causes him annoyance, it is merely an ecclesiastical form of what is commonly called 'sending to Coventry'. It may be a perfectly legitimate weapon; but in what sense is it specifically spiritual?

(<sup>2</sup>) The way in which particular schools of thought regard Erastianism is often a mere matter of accident. If all our rulers had been like Oliver Cromwell, the Nonconformists might have been Erastians to a man. And it is unlikely that High Churchmen



Church and State which have here been indicated can be best described by means of Aristotle's conception of *Politic*. This he regards as the Science of the whole duty of man, a duty which cannot be fulfilled except in the complete life of a community. Starting with this definition, we shall be constrained to admit that the State is not the only instrument by which the ends of *Politic* are attained. Some of these ends cannot be attained except through the independent action of the Individual; and, besides this, we find that in addition to the State as it is commonly understood, we need two other forms of association; namely, what we call Society, and the Church. These are in a sense independent of the State: they are not its creatures: if the State fails in its duty they may assert their right to separate action. Yet as the State is, in a special sense, the organ through which *Politic* works, it is clear that in healthy conditions the Church, Society, and the

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would have hated Erastianism as bitterly as they do, if it had not been that for so many years the State was associated in their minds with Ministers of the Crown to whose opinions they were utterly opposed.



Individual, will fall into due subordination to its authority.

It will be seen, then, that all these objections, which are raised on general grounds of principle against the intervention of the civil authorities in ecclesiastical affairs, are based upon theories which by unduly abasing the State's position have unduly exalted that of the Churches.

II. There are many Nonconformists, however, who set no store by these general objections and approve of a National Church in principle, who yet cannot bring themselves to defend the Church of England in its present form. They will maintain, with good reason, that a National Church should be a comprehensive Church, including all the Christians of the nation. This, they will complain, the Church of England cannot do, being in actual fact little more than one religious sect among the rest; so that other Churches are justly aggrieved at its unique position.

That there is much in present appearances to justify such an opinion is certain. Yet it may



be pointed out that the Church of England has never openly and confessedly renounced its duties as a National Church; and that therefore we ought not too hastily to assume that it can never be brought to fulfil them.

There are fewer Nonconformists now-a-days than there once were, who carry their Individualism so far as avowedly to prefer disunion to union, and whose ideal is that of a band of dissident Churches engaging on equal terms in free and unhampered competition. Men of all schools are coming to deplore our unhappy divisions, and to desire that the inward unity of Christians should be acknowledged by some external expression of it. It is easy, no doubt, to set too high a value on mere visible union, and to trust too much to schemes of reconciliation drawn up on paper. Yet as visible disunion is a great obstacle to healthy spiritual life, it is by no means waste labour to consider in what manner formal unity among Christians might be attained. There is, in fact, in the nature of things, but one way in which the attainment of such union is possible. People speak sometimes of a federation of the



dissident Churches. But the formation of a federal union among bodies which are still recognised as setting out with conflicting aims is impossible. There can be no federation or, indeed, association of any kind, unless those who form it share in one common purpose.

Societies of men may be looked at in two different aspects. In one aspect they may be regarded as groups brought together by Nature or Providence, and governed by laws over which the men themselves have no control. In this view the growth of the community may be traced by the historian just as the growth of a plant or animal is traced by the physiologist. In another aspect a community is an association of men who consciously unite for the pursuit of a definite end. In this aspect its laws are the creation of man's own will. A civil community is called by two distinct names, according as it is looked at in one or the other aspect. When we think of its character as a natural organism we call it a Nation; when we think of it as an association working for a set purpose we call it a State. It is with the Church in the latter of these aspects



that we are concerned, when we treat of schemes for the union of Christians.

With regard, then, to each religious society which presents itself to us, we must ask what the purpose is for which it exists. If its formal aim is, let us say, to teach Presbyterian doctrines, then, if we do not hold those doctrines, we cannot unite with it. Upon its avowed aim depends its essential character as a society. If, on the other hand, while it actually teaches Presbyterian doctrines, its formal aim is a much more comprehensive and general one, we may join it even without being Presbyterians. This assertion may be illustrated by an example from politics. Through a great part of the last century, the State in England was actually engaged in carrying out the policy of the Whigs: yet it was not formally understood to be an association for that purpose, or else no Tory could have regarded himself as a member of it. Its formal aim was recognised to be the good government of the Kingdom, an end for which all Englishmen could unite. And thus, in ecclesiastical matters, the only possible body, which can become an



instrument of corporate union, is a Church whose aim is so general that all Christians can take it for their own. This generality of aim, it may be observed, is not the same as vagueness or indefiniteness. The conceptions of Truth, of the Good, of Good Government are, all of them, perfectly definite conceptions of Reason; but they are at the same time general; and we may be united in pursuing them while we nevertheless interpret them each in his own way.

But is it not the case that the Church of England, whatever it may have become in practice, is, so far as its formal aim is concerned, just such a comprehensive body as is here described? It may be thought, at first sight, that the Church of England, like many other religious societies, is simply an association for the sake of teaching the particular doctrines which are contained in its formularies. But there are clear proofs that its aim is a much wider and more general one. The first proof is the claim made by Churchmen that the present Church is the same society as that which existed in this country before the Reformation. If the essential aim of the Church of



England were that of teaching the doctrines of the Prayer book and Articles which are now in use, it could not be maintained that, at a time when it did not teach those doctrines but taught others which in some respects conflict with them, it was still the same Church of England. The people of England, it is clear, believed at the time of the Reformation that it was the duty of the Church to teach the true religion, whatever that might be; and when their opinions on religion underwent a change, their conception of the Church's function changed accordingly. A second proof that the Church conceives its duties in general terms and not in particular ones is to be found in the avowed opinions of the Clergy. It is well known that there are many doctrines taught in the Church's formularies to which a large number of the Clergy can give no more than a ceremonial assent. If the rulers of the Church believed that the teaching of these doctrines was its essential aim, they could not appoint to its ministry men who do not accept them. But if the aims of the Church of England are thus comprehensive and general, then, just as all



those who desire good government can be members of one State while disagreeing as to the means by which good government is to be sought, so the Church can admit to its fellowship all who desire to advance the Christian Faith in however many different shapes they may hold it. There is, logically, no middle course between strict exclusiveness and broad comprehension. The Church, like any other society, must set before itself a definite and avowed aim of some kind. If this definite aim is not conceived in particular terms, it must, by logical necessity, be conceived in general ones. We may define the Church of England as an association of Englishmen for the purpose of teaching and practising the Christian Religion. No narrower definition will cover all that has been taught and practised by its authorized officers. But if we accept this general phrase, we must abide by the consequences of the multitudinous interpretations which it will bear.

It would seem, then, that the natural course for all those to take who wish for corporate union among Christians, is to try to lead the



Established Church to carry into practice, more fully and consistently than it has yet done, the view of itself which it already accepts in theory. We have in the Church of England an instrument of union ready to our hand. It can hardly, then, be thought wise that we should seek union by forming some new society. Such a society, so far as profession is concerned, could not be more comprehensive than the Church of England, and it might prove to be much less comprehensive in reality.

It is certain, however, that any proposal for using the National Establishment as a means of bringing about the visible union of the Churches will have many objections raised against it both by Churchmen and by Dissenters.

It may be said, on the side of the latter, that by entering the Established Church they would lose their liberty, and many of the distinctive merits of their own systems—in fact, that they would be joining a society in which they must always find themselves in a minority. We may point out, however, that the rights of minorities are nowhere better understood than in the Church



of England. A proof of this is the great liberty which is enjoyed by the Evangelical and Latitudinarian clergy in spite of the smallness of their numbers. It is clear, too, that the position of both these parties would be immensely strengthened by the accession of the Nonconformists to the Church. Moreover, any treaty of peace between Churchmen and Dissenters would necessarily include provision for the remedy of certain evils in the Church's present constitution. With regard, for example, to the relation between the minister and the people, each party has much to learn from the other. It is true that neither the Church's system nor that which obtains in the greater number of Nonconformist societies has such bad results in actual practice as the opponents of each represent. But it will be admitted that both have their defects. The chief defect of the Nonconformist system would seem to be that the preacher is too much in the power of those to whom he preaches. That the minister should be elected by the people is, probably, on the whole a wise rule. If, however, the Nonconformist Minister when once elected, were as secure in his



tenure of office as is the Clergyman of the Established Church, he must assuredly be in a position of greater dignity and authority than now. It would seem to be an equal defect in the system of the Church of England that the Parish Clergyman is not merely free, but well nigh the absolute master of his congregation. It has been said that the Church of England puts a Pope in each parish. Now, so far as the relations of the Parish Clergyman to his Bishop on the one hand and his Assistant Curates on the other are concerned, his position of advantage is generally allowed to have good results. Its effects, however, upon the laity are less healthy, since it takes out of their hands the control of what would seem naturally to belong to them. While preaching is a personal action, in which a man should be left as free as may be, public worship is essentially a corporate action. In worship the minister is acting not in his own name but in that of the people. Ought they not, then, to have a control over what is their own act? In its main outlines the worship of the Established Church is controlled by the people at large through Acts of Parliament. Might it not



be well that those not unimportant questions of dress, music, and other ceremonial, which are now in the decision of the clergyman, should be left to the judgment of the people of each parish? In this and all similar matters, it is probable that the result of union between Churchmen and Nonconformists would be the adoption by each party of the strong points in the other's system.

It will be alleged, as another obstacle to union, that what a Churchman means when he speaks of membership in the Church is something very different from what is understood by a Nonconformist when he uses the same words. The great strength of the Nonconformist Churches lies in the fact that all their members are men who profess a strict standard of Christian life. The Established Church, on the other hand, reckons among its members many openly worldly people. If a Churchman is asked who are the members of the Church of England, he will probably answer that they are all those Englishmen who call themselves Christians, or that they are all the baptised persons of the nation whether they call themselves Christians or not. It must be admitted that the fact that



the Church of England makes no discrimination between those who profess a high standard and those who make no such profession is a real evil. It is an evil for which many earnest Churchmen are eagerly seeking a remedy. Nevertheless the wide use of the name of Christian, which is current in the Church, teaches a truth. No Christian, who is in any sense a Liberal, will deny that every member of a Christian nation partakes in some measure in Christian blessings and guidance. It was held by Aristotle<sup>(1)</sup> that though young children are not capable of true happiness, they may be called happy in the hope of what they may in the future become. We may make a similar generous extension of the Christian Name, conceding it to children and other unconverted persons in the hope that they may some day make good their claim to it. In this matter again, then, Nonconformists and Churchmen have something to learn from one another.

Another objection that will be urged against a scheme of corporate union will be expressed in the phrase that even for the sake of unity we

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(1) Nicomachean Ethics, I. 9 (10).



must not surrender truth. This is an objection which will be raised by Churchmen. The answer to it is that we do not surrender our beliefs by the mere fact of joining ourselves with those who do not hold them. The High Churchman and the Evangelical are members of the same Church; yet neither considers that he is shewing by this union that he sets little store by his own peculiar doctrines. There are some people who say that they will admit to fellowship those who differ from them on non-essential matters, but not those who differ from them on essential ones. But this distinction is of small value: since, if the Christian religion is an organic whole, every one of its doctrines must belong equally to its essence. Moreover, we must not belie our convictions even on small points. If, then, to unite with a man implied assent to his beliefs, we must each of us have a separate Church for himself, and *Quot homines, tot sententiae* would become *Quot homines, tot ecclesiae*. There is, too, a special unreasonableness in all such objections in the mouths of Churchmen. To exclude Nonconformists who are for the most part orthodox, while



some of the extremest Latitudinarians are admitted not only to the communion of the Church but to its ministry, is to strain at gnats and swallow camels.

It will be said, however, that the gravest obstacle to union is not the question of Doctrine, but the question of Orders. The Nonconformists, it will be argued, can never admit the necessity of Episcopal ordination, and High Churchmen can never accept any but an episcopally ordained ministry. The opinion of the High Church party must necessarily and deservedly carry great weight in such a matter. But the difficulty is not so serious as it at first sight seems. It should be noticed that what High Churchmen require is not that a minister should admit the necessity of ordination, but simply that he should be ordained. They are perfectly contented to acknowledge the ministry of Evangelicals and Broad Churchmen who do not regard Ordination as, in any but a legal sense, necessary. It is surely not an impossible feat of statesmanship to devise a plan by which the reconciled Nonconformist Ministers, while accepting Ordination out



of respect to the consciences of High Churchmen, should yet make it perfectly clear that they did not wish to throw doubt upon the validity of their own previous ministrations.

It may be objected that unity obtained by any such methods as these would be a merely nominal unity, and would not lead the persons who were thus brought together to any greater sympathy with, or regard for, one another than had subsisted among them as members of separate Churches. But unity in name often brings unity in spirit. Of this the Anglican Clergy themselves afford a conspicuous example. The mere fact of belonging to the same ministry has created among them a strong sense of brotherly relation to one another, which, in many cases at least, as everyone who is well acquainted with the English Clergyman will bear witness, not even the sharpest doctrinal differences are able to destroy. May we not hope that a similar sense of brotherhood would grow up among English Christians at large, if only it could by any means be brought about that all should reckon themselves members of one single Church?



It should not be forgotten that one hindrance to union of this kind arises from a certain powerlessness of the Church of England to excite the admiration of those who are not closely acquainted with it. Looked at from a distance it wears too much the appearance of a cold and dreary *via media*. To the Church of Rome, seen in one aspect as a vast intellectual system, in another as a living government stretching into all countries, there belongs a perennial power of impressing the imagination and the heart. The work, again, of the Protestant Evangelist—whose aim is to proclaim through the world one single proposition, assent to which shall bring salvation—gains a sublimity from its very simplicity. The Church of England falls, as it were, between two stools. Those who have lived their lives within its communion perceive in the mellowed beauty of its liturgy and the chastened dignity of its traditional ritual a grace with which nothing else can be compared. But the special gifts and graces of the Church it requires, as has been said<sup>(1)</sup>, an initiation

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(1) See Mr. Shorthouse's Introductory Essay to Facsimile Reprint of Herbert's "Temple". Fisher Unwin, 1882, p. vii.



to comprehend; and we must not be too much surprised if all that outsiders can find to say about it is that it appears to them weak in enthusiasm, jejune in theology, and impotent in discipline. With regard to this external unattractiveness of the Church, the Clergy, despite their high level of personal holiness, are not altogether free from blame. They incline too much to the view that theology can be learned out of text-books. They are disposed, therefore, to treat a theological thinker who differs from them, especially if he is unlearned, with the same scant respect as we might shew to a man who evolved from his own inner consciousness a theory, let us say, of geography. Failing to perceive that it is a spiritual mind and an aptitude for *a priori* thought that, in the last resort, makes a theologian, and not deep reading, they sometimes rather repel enquirers than attract them.

No consideration of this kind, however, ought to be allowed to weigh for a moment against the immeasurable benefits of union: and it is, as we have seen, less by its actual working than by its formal claims that the Church, when regarded



as an instrument of reconciliation, should be judged. That such reconciliation should be attempted in a hasty act of legislation is not what any thoughtful man could advise. But if Churchmen and Nonconformists kept before themselves the thought of corporate union as a goal for which both parties were making, it is possible that matters might ripen more quickly than most of us have yet ventured to hope. The social changes by which the line of division between the upper and middle classes is being gradually broken down, are all contributing to this same end; as also is the growth of that good feeling between men of different communions which is fostered by such meetings as the Keswick Convention, an example which might well be widely imitated. It is true, of course, that formal union between Churchmen and Dissenters could not be brought about by private arrangement. The accession to the Established Church of a large number of new ministers, who were already in charge of Christian congregations, would probably require fresh limitations of the areas of parishes. But it need not be doubted that, if terms of union were agreed upon by a



preponderant number in both parties, the Legislature would find little difficulty in putting these terms into operation. The effect of such a reconciliation would be felt throughout Christendom.

It would seem, then, to be a fair conclusion from the facts which are within our knowledge as to the state of religious parties in England, that the aim of Christian Liberals should be—to use a familiar phrase—to mend the National Establishment and not to end it. There is all the similarity which this phrase suggests between the case of the Church of England and the case of the House of Lords. The State might find that both Church and Peerage, though good servants, were bad enemies. Divorced from the State, they would still remain powerful bodies, and might become sources of grave public danger. A disestablished Church of England making terms with the Pope might bring about results which Englishmen would not wish to see. The effect of a disestablished Peerage has been considered already. As long, on the other hand, as both these institutions are in subordination to the State,



so long, the higher they stand in the respect and affection of all classes, the better instruments will they be for enabling the State to maintain its command over all branches of the nation's life.



## CHAPTER IV

### THEORY AND PRACTICE

THUS the law laid down by the Nonconformists, on the occasion with which the phrase "the Nonconformist Conscience" is more particularly associated, is seen to have a wider application than is commonly recognised. There could hardly be a more shallow view than that which regards this pronouncement of theirs as a mere declaration of assent to the principle of the Seventh Commandment. If it had been no more than that, it would have had but the smallest degree of significance. It is clear, however, that their principle bore upon political, and not upon personal, conduct. The doctrine, therefore, which they aimed at teaching, was that the strictest



relation of interdependence must be maintained between a man's public and private life.

The change which this action of the Nonconformists has wrought in popular feeling has been well shewn by a recent event. It is probable that a few years ago the thought would hardly have occurred to anyone that the spectators of a play had the least shadow of responsibility with regard to the private character of its author, except so far as it might be reflected in the play itself. But now, as we see, it is at once instinctively felt that the managers of a theatre cannot avowedly and undisguisedly produce the work of a writer charged with flagrant moral offences; and that it is only with explanations and apologies that they can produce it at all. The somewhat hasty manner in which this principle was carried out serves only to shew all the more plainly under what a peremptory sense of necessity the action was taken. It is beginning to be perceived that it is, in truth, an act of disrespect to an author to be willing to use him for our amusement at a time when we should stand aloof from him in society; and it is becoming



less and less easy to teach that Literature and Art have no relation to Conduct. The natural result of this recognition of the close relation to one another of all departments of action must be, as we have seen, that we shall come to regard civilized life as one single corporate undertaking, the unity of which is expressed and maintained by putting every part of it under the presidency of a single authority, the State.

And there are other ways in which we can give effect to this doctrine besides that of giving the State the patronage and control of Social Life and Religion. To some people the relation of the State to Commerce and Industry will seem far more important than any of the matters that have been here discussed. It is in the demand that Commerce should not be regarded as a matter of private enterprise merely, but should be put, far more strictly than it is now, under public control, that Socialistic principles most commonly find expression. One chief purpose of Socialist writings is to maintain that better work will be done when men work in concert with one another than when they work against one



another, and that the hope of gaining an advantage over our neighbours is not the only motive which prompts us to put forth our best energies. Much of the noblest work that is done in the world, from that of the artist or the philosopher on the one hand to that of the housewife who labours from pure love of order and cleanliness on the other, is done, it will be pointed out, in conditions in which the desire of external reward can have but little weight as a motive, and the desire of overreaching other people none at all. We do not consider it necessary that in an army each individual soldier should have the chance of gaining a personal advantage by engaging in single combat after the manner of a Homeric hero: but each man is able to subordinate his own interests to the common good. Similarly, the Socialist will argue, Commerce will best attain its end if it becomes a corporate enterprise of the whole community.

Moreover, just as the State has a duty towards Commerce, Social Life, and Religion, so it has, on the same principle, a duty towards Learning, Art, Literature, and all other such capital divisions



of the field of human interest. With regard to Art, no one will in modern days propose that it should receive more than a bare recognition at the hands of the State. To a Greek there would have seemed to be no necessary absurdity in the thought even of putting it under State-control. We hear, for example, of a law passed at Athens<sup>(1)</sup> regulating the number of actors in the tragic Chorus. The Greek Drama was thus in some measure a corporate work, as Mr. Ruskin has shewn was the case also with the great works of Gothic Architecture. It could not, however, be seriously desired by anyone that we should return to this Greek method, even though it may be doubted whether the extreme Individualism of some modern artists is not a sign of artistic decadence. But the mere State-recognition of Art stands on a different level. In England, Art is recognised by means of the Laureateship; the true significance of which is perceived clearly enough by Individualists of the Bohemian type who, looking

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(<sup>1</sup>) See Mr. Paley's Introduction to his small edition of the *Eumenides* of Aeschylus, Deighton, Bell & Co. 1880. p. 7, note.



upon all but the most necessary State-action with disfavour, cry out for the abolition of this office on the express ground that Government has nothing to do with Poetry. Dramatic Art receives State-recognition wherever there is a subsidized Theatre or Opera House. Again, we may regard the adjournment of the House of Commons on Derby Day as a public recognition of the Turf. Our opinion on this matter must depend upon whether we regard the Turf as a mere morbid excrescence of our National life, or as a limb which, even if diseased, it should be our aim to heal rather than to cut off. If we take the more liberal view, and are prepared therefore, as individuals, to shew our approval of the Turf, why should we be unwilling that it should receive the approval of Parliament also? It would seem, indeed, that the more clearly we come to perceive that not only the material life of man, but his moral life too, can be lived at its best nowhere but in an ordered and harmonious community—in which each citizen contributes his share to the public good just as each instrument in an orchestra contributes its share to the general effect—the



more ready must we be to admit the right of the State to deal with human pursuits of every kind, on the ground that it is to the State, as the organ of the public conscience, that the duty belongs of exercising that guiding authority without which no common action is possible.

Such then, are some of the effects which will follow if we apply the Greek doctrine of the State's function to a modern community. To anyone, however, who contends that this doctrine is even in the least degree worthy to be taken as a guide in the solution of problems which now confront us, it is sure to be objected that it is, after all, a mere theory, and that what Englishmen most dread, and have most reason to dread, is the application of theories to politics. Englishmen, it is maintained, wish to see public questions decided by Common Sense and not by reasoning.

The plain answer to this objection is that a rational being is under compulsion to employ his reason about all branches of conduct, whether public or private. It is true that there are some



points of personal behaviour in which we find by experience that it is wisest to trust ourselves to the guidance of instinct. But even here we are acting upon a reasoned theory as to the value of unpremeditated action; and, besides this, we must employ our reason to set limits to the sphere over which instinct is to be allowed to range. And similarly, when we are told that the British Constitution was not produced by the reasonings of philosophers—that, as the phrase goes, it was not made but grew—we may answer that, nevertheless, it was not shaped by blind chance but by the application of the best wits of the country to each question as it arose. It may be conceded that the reasoning powers of the man of affairs are in some respects sharper than those of the philosopher who sits thinking in his study. The one, however, is a reasoner no less than the other. The protest, therefore, which is so often made against political rationalism is, if it has any general meaning at all, a mere protest against political thinking. These protests are most frequently made, as we know, by highly educated men. And there is no doubt that this



dread of theory and reason is sometimes brought about by the study of history. We perceive that the great leaders of past time have often owed much to the corrective force supplied by their opponents; that, therefore, in many cases the complete triumph of either side in the controversy would have been a misfortune for humanity at large; that, in fact, true progress has most commonly been made by Thesis and Antithesis, and has been the resultant of rival forces. We ourselves, then, it will be argued, cannot put any great trust in our own convictions at the present time, but must always be haunted by the fear that future ages may come to rejoice over the failure of our schemes. Against despairing scepticism of this kind, however, may it not be reasonably urged that the discovery of this Law of Thesis and Antithesis must in some measure suspend its operation? If, on the one hand, we allow the thought of it to cow us into inaction, it seems likely that we shall leave nothing behind us upon which posterity will be called to pass any judgment at all. If, on the other hand, we learn, by observing the workings of this Law in



history, to act with greater caution than has sometimes been practised in earlier days, and in particular to look with respect at the opinions of our adversaries, may we not hope that we shall do less than we might otherwise have done for which future ages will see cause to blame us? But, in any case, is it not just to compare the political reasoner, who deduces the conclusion that reason is not applicable to his subject, to the man in Hogarth's picture who saws off the beam on which he sits?

The opinion, moreover, that Englishmen habitually prefer common sense to theory has no foundation in fact. This can be shewn by an example taken from the very subject which we have been considering. Upon what, we may ask, are based the most stubborn objections which have to be encountered by the defender of the Peerage and the Established Church? They are based upon the doctrine of the Sacred Right of Free Competition. A more unnatural and purely theoretical doctrine than this has never been put forth in the world: and no doctrine has been carried



out to its logical conclusion with more ruthless disregard of common sense.

This theory—which is the form in which Individualism nowadays most commonly shews itself—is to the effect that the State must frankly recognise human life as a mere selfish struggle for existence or for victory, and must regard its own duty in the matter as no more than that of ‘keeping a ring’, and seeing fair play among the combatants. As between individuals, opinions, Churches, the State must observe a perfect neutrality. It is not to enquire which is the right side in the contest, or even which is the weaker side: for, though it has to see fair play when the struggle is actually in progress, it is not to be considered any part of its duty to see that the opponents are equally matched at the start. Inequality in the gifts of fortune is to be treated as if it lay as completely outside the State’s control as inequality in the gifts of nature. There are, indeed, certain rules of the game which the State must make the combatants observe. Besides defending a man’s property, it must defend him from personal violence and from certain other annoyances; and if he becomes utterly unable to



hold his own in the struggle it must keep him from dying of hunger. But beyond this point the State's duties cannot, on this theory, be held to go. Even the cruellest inequalities among its citizens are of no concern to it, provided only that it has not created those inequalities by its own action. Its whole duty is simply that of putting no check upon the struggle beyond enforcing these few necessary rules, and of shewing no favour to one party more than to another.

This doctrine will, of course, forbid both the giving of special privileges to a Church, and the conferring of a title of nobility upon an individual. It will also deny the right of the State to determine fair prices or fair wages. The fair price of a thing must be taken to mean the price that one can get for it, and the State will not be thought to be always obliged to intervene even when this price is gained by means of deception, since, as has been expressly taught, adulteration of goods is to be treated as merely one of the forms of lawful competition.

It is not difficult to see how such a doctrine comes into conflict with common sense. Why,



it will be asked, if we are not to allow even the smallest inequalities of rank or privilege, are we to be so ready to tolerate the very greatest inequalities of wealth? And why for the sake of free competition are we to surrender all other kinds of freedom? It is well known that the result of allowing a man to work as many hours as he likes for as low wages as he likes, is that other men are forced to work as long and as cheaply as he does. A freedom of this sort is perfect bondage. And the principle that the fair price of a thing is the price one can get it for, would, if applied to the price of labour, justify that method of production which we call Sweating. Moreover, could anything be more at variance with common sense than that Christian Churches should confess that they regard themselves not as allies but as rivals? Yet this theory of Competition, when applied to the relations of Churches, proceeds on the assumption that every Church is working, not with the rest, but against them.

The effects of this theory upon Schools and Universities is seen in the throwing open of close scholarships. The intention with which the change



has been carried out is that of sweeping away privilege and giving equal chances to everyone. But in practice, of course, no such equality of chances can ever exist. The advantage lost by one man is gained by some one else. The chief result in this case has been that many scholarships which in earlier days were held by poor men, have fallen now into the hands of the rich, who alone can command that high standard of preparatory teaching which the stress of open competition makes necessary. We cannot say that it is in accordance with common sense to put these scholarships out of the reach of those who are most likely to profit by them, in order to maintain the fiction that everyone has an equal chance of getting them.

Again, the opinion that the State has no direct concern with questions of right and wrong has bred in many people a general unwillingness to decide any public matter on avowedly moral grounds. Even some who would not go so far as to say that considerations of justice and public virtue are mere 'fancy' considerations, are yet haunted by the feeling that a pure appeal to the



Moral Law, unless backed by some lower and more selfish argument, is a little unworthy of the seriousness of a political assembly; and thus, even when they are in sympathy with a demand for moral action made by the plain sense of the community, feel bound to discover some grounds of mere expediency for this action, to serve at least as a second line of defence. The plain untaught man always perceives quite clearly that the execution of a criminal, for example, is to be regarded as a purely moral action, an act of public vengeance for wrong done. This is certainly the view of the matter taken by the crowds who, at the death of any peculiarly heartless murderer, give cheers at the hoisting of the black flag and say that hanging was too good for him. There are philosophic persons, on the other hand, who justify the punishment on the ground that it may act as a warning to those who are tempted to commit similar crimes in the future, or on any other ground rather than that of mere justice. Similarly, if the State puts down blasphemy or obscene writing, it is explained that this is not done because they are essentially unseemly and



morally harmful, but because they wound the feelings of respectable religious people. Indeed the teachings of this school of philosophers seem to have led to the strangest inversions of thought on all subjects. A man, writing to the newspapers on behalf of a convicted person whom he believes to be innocent, will close his appeal with a passionate request that public sentiment may be spared the shock which it will sustain if the prisoner is put to death while there still remains a doubt as to whether he is guilty. Common sense would have thought rather of the shock to the prisoner's neck. But with a large class of the community roundabout thinking of this sort seems to have become habitual.

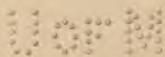
There are, indeed, many indications that the power of this Theory of Free Competition is on the wane. A few years ago it would have seemed vain to hope that the right, for example, of a landowner to erect advertisement boards on his estate could ever be restricted by law. It would have been felt by most people that to limit such a right as this for the mere purpose of preserving the beauty of a landscape was to



subordinate serious considerations to fanciful ones. Public opinion is not so firmly set in that direction now, and is prepared to recognise the right of the State to consider not only our moral, but even our aesthetic, welfare. Yet the change in opinion proceeds but slowly: and there are still many people who indignantly refuse to allow that the interests of Commerce ought ever to be expected to yield to the claims either of the works of Nature or of the monuments of Antiquity. The desire for unrestricted commercial freedom is sometimes accompanied, not merely by a coldness, but by an intense contemptuous bitterness, towards all considerations of beauty. We are most of us well acquainted with the opinion which treats pageantry and ceremonial of every kind as childish and unreasonable, condemning even such a generally accepted custom as the wearing of black clothes at funerals. A similar feeling has had considerable influence in politics, and has lent force to the attack upon many ancient institutions. Some people who have nothing to say against the privileges of wealth protest vehemently against all privileges which are of a



ceremonial character, and desire the destruction of the House of Lords and the Established Church not because those bodies are mischievous and corrupt, but simply because they are old and magnificent. Many of the proposals that have been put forward for the reform of the Universities and their Colleges seem to have been inspired by much the same sentiment. It may be doubted whether the attempt which was made, during the agitations against the Cambridge Spinning House, to curtail the powers of the Vice-Chancellor, was based upon anything so sane as the belief that cruelty and injustice had actually followed from the exercise of those powers; and it is hard to see what else but the wish to reduce everything to a dead level of uniformity could have prompted the proposal that, at Oxford, Studentships, Demyships, and Postmasterships should be merged in the common title of Scholarships. The story is told of some one who wished to carry reform even further in this same direction, and proposed that the Colleges should discard their cumbrous antique names, and designate themselves plainly and straightforwardly, after the manner of the





streets in New York, by the ordinal numbers. This story is, at least, a fair caricature of the spirit by which some University reformers have been animated (1). The desire for smug neatness and stern prosaic uniformity is as much a mere passion as is the romantic sentiment which will tolerate even the gravest abuses provided only that they are picturesque; it is, in fact, a kind of inverted Romanticism. And we have only to observe how often the destructive proposals of a certain kind of Radicalism are grounded, not upon a plain statement of the harm done by the institutions which it is proposed to destroy, but rather upon vague denunciations of them as mediaeval, and assertions that they are contrary to the Spirit of the Age (2), and so forth, to see

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(1) At Westminster School, twelve or fourteen years ago, four rooms, which bore interesting historic names to which the Scholars were much attached, had their names changed by the authorities, and were officially spoken of as Blocks A, B, C and D.

(2) It is often said, in this connexion, that the House of Lords is an 'anachronism'. But this is surely an incorrect use of the word. An anachronism is a literary figure, not a legislative





that Englishmen are sometimes moved to action by other forces besides that of calm judicial common sense.

Moreover, the passion for Free Competition and all that has gone with it, is not the only proof of the power of sentiment over Englishmen. Romanticism of the ordinary kind is itself a strong, though unavowed, political force. The state of mind described in Mr. Browning's lines:—

All that the old dukes had been without knowing it

This duke would fain know he was without being it. <sup>(1)</sup> is not a very uncommon one: and some such feeling has been, though not the sole cause, at least one of the causes, of the recent revival of mediaeval ritual and music in the Church of England. This revival of ancient ceremonial has been accompanied by attempts to found schools and other communities on a mediaeval model. And though it is chiefly in

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assembly. If I spoke of the House of Lords as existing before the Deluge, this would be an anachronism; but it is strange to apply the term to the House itself.

(<sup>1</sup>) The Flight of the Duchess.



ecclesiastical matters that the constructive energy of this antiquarian sentiment has been shewn, there can be no doubt that the same romanticist passion has served as a powerful defence, not only to the House of Lords and the Established Church, but to the Corporation of London and many other ancient bodies besides. Many people who would not take the trouble to revive old-world customs which have died out, find nevertheless a keen pleasure in any remnants of antiquity which still exist: and it is probable that the fear of robbing life of its beauty and its poetry is the unconfessed cause of much of the resistance to reasonable reforms which is publicly justified on other grounds.

Thus it is far too late in the day for us to trust for political guidance to simple unreflecting instinct. We are beset with conflicting sentiments and theories, and cannot, therefore, avoid confusion except by rational criticism of these rival opinions. An eminent writer has called his treatise on Ethics 'The Theory of Practice': and a Theory of Practice is as much needed for public, as for



private conduct. As it is impossible to escape from theories altogether, the best thing that we can do is to furnish ourselves with sound ones.

We stand in especial need of a clear theory with regard to the matter we have just been considering. It is certain that, in the main, ceremonial is approved by the common sense of mankind. There is no department of life in which ceremonies of some kind have not sprung up. Thus it seems foolish to abolish ceremonies wantonly, and for the mere sake of abolishing them. Indeed, it would seem to be well worth while to take some pains to preserve any piece of existing ceremonial, unless there is a clear reason to the contrary, just as we take pains to preserve an old building or picture. The retention of such usages helps to breed in us a sense of the continuity of modern society with the society of the past, and to destroy them is often to sweep away the plainest record that is left to us of the wealth of picturesque incident with which the development of the human Spirit has been accompanied. But, if common sense approves the love of ceremony, it certainly disapproves constructive Romanticism;



and unless we are willing that the former shall be condemned by being confounded with the latter, our theory must make a clear distinction between the two. Experience would seem to suggest to us a simple principle: namely, that Ceremonial, like every other form of Art, is healthy and good just so far as it is the direct product of noble passion, and no farther. History shews us that passionate fervour, whether of religious faith or civil patriotism, has a universal tendency to clothe itself in a garment of dignified pageantry. The elaborate ritual, for example, which surrounds the House of Commons has grown up spontaneously as the symbol and expression of the vivid sense, which the House has never lost, of the dignity of its office. The ritual of the Roman Catholic Church is an equally spontaneous growth which, silently shaping itself from age to age, has been confirmed and consecrated by unbroken continuity of usage. Where, however, a system of ritual has been constructed by conscious effort,—whether the effort was due to a wish to throw oneself back into the life of a past time, or to a mere pedantic desire for antiquarian



correctness, or, as has been confessedly the case with some Anglican clergymen, to a deliberate calculation of its didactic effects—this system of ritual must necessarily lack the beauty which spontaneity alone can give. We are led, then, to draw a sharp line of distinction between a natural growth and a reasoned revival; and, on the same principle, while refraining from the abolition of ceremonies which can still maintain themselves, we shall make no attempt to retain those which have ceased to be the genuine embodiment of any passion.

A similar rule will hold good with regard to the preservation of ancient corporations. It would seem to be a Law of Nature that every instrument—such as a ship, a sword, or a piece of good construction in Architecture,—which is well adapted to an honourable use, possesses artistic beauty. All those Mediaeval bodies—Colleges, Municipalities, National Churches and so forth—in which the Romanticist rightly takes pleasure, are a further fulfilment of this same principle; since it was for use and not for beauty that they were originally formed. It is natural, therefore,



that they should lose their beauty if they outlive their usefulness. We are told, sometimes, of the beauty of the ancient institutions of the City of London; and this is used as an argument against reform. But may it not fairly be maintained that, since the Corporation has ceased to be the Governing Body of London, and since the position which belonged to it in old times is now taken by the County Council, it is a violation of all fitness that the state and magnificence should remain with the one body while the work is done by the other? This very same case furnishes a notable example of the causal connexion between usefulness and beauty. It has sometimes been said that in modern days we have lost the power of forming institutions which shall be pleasing, as the mediaeval institutions were, to the aesthetic sense; and people have pointed, in support of this contention, to the prosaic ugliness of such bodies as the Metropolitan Board of Works. Events, however, have furnished us with a refutation of this theory. The ugliness of the Board of Works may be set down to the fact that it took no very exalted view of its du-



ties. The County Council, which has approached its work in a different spirit and whose sole aim has been that of giving London a reasonable government, cannot be accused by its worst enemy of a lack of picturesqueness. The lesson would seem to be that, if we start with a lofty view of the duties of public life, picturesqueness is a thing which may be trusted to follow of itself: and that thus—while we refrain from needless destruction of ancient bodies—we may nevertheless dare to undertake even the boldest reforms which are necessary to the health of the State without any fear that we shall thereby rob life of its beauty. A sound theory will in this case have a distinct effect upon practice.

And just as we need a definite theory to guide us in such matters as these, so also do we need a definite theory with regard to the wider question of the functions of the State in general. Is the State—in Aristotelian phrase—an association for the sake of mere living, or an association for the sake of living well? Should its aim be the narrow one of keeping the peace, or the broad one of realising in full the Moral Ideal? Are



Religion, Art, and Social Life, outside the province of the Statesman or within it? We seem bound to accept one or other of these theories; since it is hardly possible that any third theory will be propounded which shall be distinct from both. Which then, are we to choose?

It seems strange that any modern man who has once set the two theories side by side should remain long in doubt between them. Why should the State confine itself to the narrower function? It is the acknowledged duty of man in his individual capacity to do as much good as it lies in his power to do. Why is not a community of men bound by the same obligation? The doctrine that Religion, Social Life, and the rest, lie outside the State's province must, in the last resort, be defended either on the ground that they are sacred and private matters which the State is not worthy to touch—a view of the State wholly inconsistent with Socialism—or else on the ground that they are too trivial to deserve the State's notice—a view which is every day becoming less common. The thinker of to-day seldom speaks of Religion in the scornful tone which was usual a century



ago; and the sternest of political puritans no longer feels his old contempt for social intercourse, even on its lighter side. He is beginning to perceive that man cannot live by votes alone: and that the gift of Civil Liberty is incomplete till it is followed by reforms which more directly affect our daily lives. This general widening of sympathy must make Englishmen more and more ready to accept the Aristotelian doctrine that the true aim of the State is the harmonious development of human life in all its branches.

It may be objected that this Aristotelian ideal is, after all, a somewhat worldly one; and that, just as the individual man whose professed aim is the full cultivation of every part of his own nature is inclined to forget the concerns of his neighbours, so the State which sets before itself a similar purpose will be likely to forget its duties to humanity at large. Such a result, however, would be due to a perversion of Aristotle's theory, not to the theory itself: for Aristotle was well aware that true self-development might require the fullest self-sacrifice <sup>(1)</sup>. Courage or

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(1) Nicomachean Ethics. III. 6.(9).



manliness, without which self-development is incomplete, will lead a man to face death, that is to say, the destruction of the very self he is developing. Public manliness—if such a phrase may be used—would lead a State to face utter ruin in the cause of justice and freedom. If the State is, as Aristotle says, an association for the sake of the Good, it must seek the Good in foreign policy as well as in home affairs. No higher or more Christian theory of the State's function can be conceived.

Moreover, the Aristotelian theory, in bringing human pursuits of every kind under one Science, is in accordance with all the best thought of our own time. It is true that disunifying doctrines of various kinds have had considerable power in philosophy as in politics. The type of thinker is by no means rare whose whole aim is to break up knowledge into fragments; who represents Faith as something wholly independent of Reason, and Reason as a faculty opposed to Common Sense; who tells us that Religion has no bearing upon Political Economy, and Art no relation to Morals. The phrase 'Art for Art's sake'—which,



if it only meant that beautiful things are ends in themselves, we might all be willing to employ—is commonly used by those who believe about Art, as others have believed about Politics, that it lies apart from the general body of the interests of mankind, so that in judging a picture or a poem the critic must take no account of its ethical or speculative import. The view-hunter, again, whose boast is that he travels for the mere love of natural scenery, without the least spark of interest in the manners, customs, or thoughts, of the nations among whom he goes, is another example of the same tendency. But the main drift of modern thought is all in the opposite direction. Mr. Ruskin has given it as a reason why some travellers do not admire the Swiss mountains, that they do not love the Swiss people. And the aim of much of his teaching has been to shew that the man who will best be able to represent in Art any plant or animal, will not be the cold scientific enquirer who can examine it most dispassionately under his microscope, but rather the man in whose mind it is most closely associated with his religion,



his affections, or his needs. Indeed, the principle is being laid down for all branches of knowledge, that nothing can be understood in isolation. Thus Professor Freeman protested against the view that ancient history or modern history could either of them be studied apart from the other. And it has become a commonplace among metaphysicians that Reason, whether employed in the pure sciences, in judgments on Morals or on Art, in the perception of visible things, or in any way whatsoever, is throughout one single principle; and, similarly, that we must recognise the whole Universe as one single system of relations. Modern philosophy, in fact, is more and more clearly taking up the position indicated by Plato in his doctrine of the Idea of the Good—a doctrine which, however dimly it is apprehended, is having a great influence upon the modern world—namely that man cannot perfectly understand any one thing, till he has attained that high intellectual standpoint from which he is able to understand all things. This sense of the dependence of everything upon everything else must necessarily have an effect upon politics. The narrow view



of the Statesman's functions can no longer survive when it is once seen that administrative duties, like all others, can never be understood apart from a knowledge of the place they fill in the general scheme of human life.

The primary purpose, however, of this essay is not to defend the Greek Theory of the State, but to point out that the Nonconformist Conscience is already logically committed to it. This is a matter of no small importance. The Nonconformists are not among those who hold that in politics logic counts for nothing. Trained in a school of strict respect for principle, they can be trusted to act upon the logical consequences of their convictions. And that which is the creed of the Nonconformist Conscience to-day, is likely to be the policy of the Liberal Party to-morrow.

There can be little doubt that the greater number of Englishmen—some in the spirit of Faith, others in the spirit of Fatalism—believe firmly in the ultimate triumph of Liberal principles. But it is clear, to borrow a phrase from Theology, that there is taking place within the Liberal Party



a rapid Development of Doctrine. It must be a matter, then, of anxious inquiry to forecast what the Liberalism of the future will be. It is often hastily assumed that Liberalism must necessarily advance along a path of destruction: that it will sweep away first the House of Lords, then all Established Churches, and lastly, perhaps, even the Throne itself. The present essay is an attempt to shew that this assumption is without foundation; and that the true progress of the Liberal Spirit is not towards passionate destructive Radicalism, but rather towards calm constructive Socialism.

If this contention is sound, we may feel sure that the broadening of view, which will naturally accompany their abandonment of political Individualism, will greatly strengthen the hands of Liberals in dealing with social reform. A certain weakness must always beset the reformer who reforms institutions whose good qualities he does not perceive. And, in particular, it will become far easier than it now is for Nonconformists to come to terms with the defenders of the Established Church, if the former party can lay aside the belief that the connexion of a Church with the



State is essentially and intrinsically an evil thing. If it is perceived that this belief is quite incompatible with a high view of the State's function, then the only political dispute between Dissenters and Churchmen which will remain will turn on the question of Endowment and not on that of Establishment. Now, while the question of Establishment must be for both parties to the controversy a question of principle, the question of Endowment is merely a question of money. It is incredible that a purely material difficulty such as this can be a permanent obstacle to the unity of Christians.

It may be said that, throughout this book, the argument is conceived too much in the hopeful vein. To this objection it may be replied, in the first place, that good cause for hopefulness is to be found in the recent history both of religion and of social life. And, secondly, it should be remembered that the value of an ideal does not depend wholly upon the expectation that it can be speedily realized. The mere setting before ourselves of a high conception, as something to be attained to in the future, must have a great



effect on our present policy, both in what it leads us to do and in what it leads us to refrain from doing. Those who believe that the State is an association for the sake of human good, are guilty of inconsistency if they wish to diminish its sphere of authority. The Body Politic cannot attain its good except in the healthy and concordant activity of all its organs. Such concordant activity, then, a Government which really makes human good its aim, must set itself to bring about. If—to recur to a figure already used—the common life of humanity is compared to the music of an Orchestra, in which Commerce, Art, Science, Social Life, Religion and the rest, are the several instruments, the State must take upon itself the office of Conductor. There is clearly no other authority to which this place can be assigned. But the moral of such a view is certainly not that the State should relax its hold upon any of the institutions of Society.

THE END



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